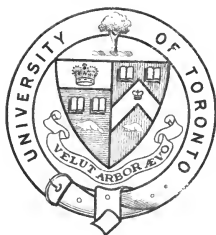


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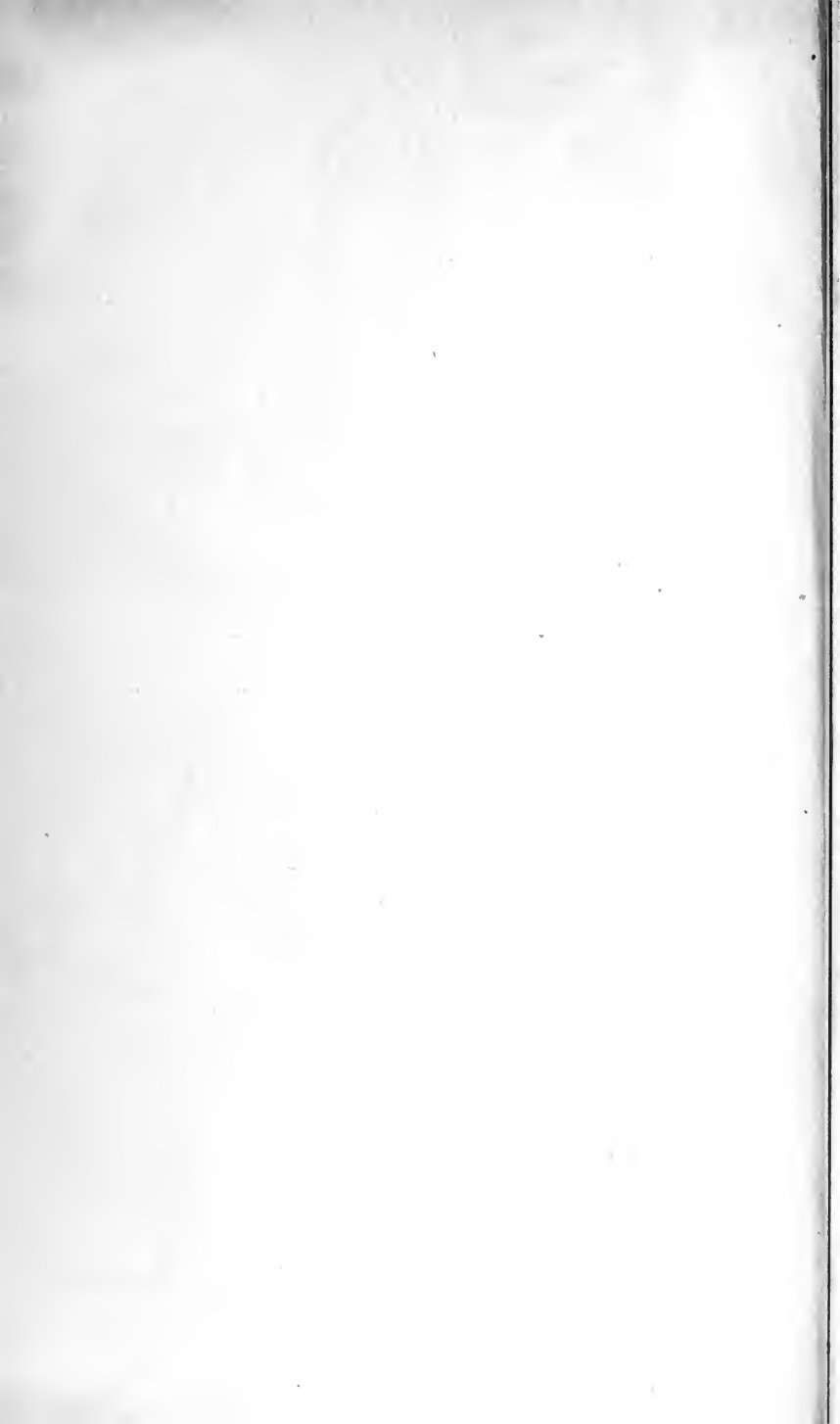


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May 1871
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ESTELLE RUSSELL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO.”



NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1870.

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Lucy M. Russell

ESTELLE RUSSELL.

CHAPTER I.

ESTELLE'S LOVE-LETTER.

THE short winter of Languedoc was drawing near its close. The noonday sun had been fierce enough, but towards evening a cold wind had sprung up, increasing in violence as the sun went down. It was raging now tempestuously over the city of Toulouse; sweeping up and down the streets in eddying blasts, bursting open doors, slamming the heavy window-shutters that careless housewives had left unfastened, screaming down chimneys, and whistling through every cranny of the quaint brick houses.

The day-laborers on their way home to the poor suburb across the bridge of St. Cyprien, meeting the blast, turned back and waited shivering; the peasant women and children fled before it, taking refuge in courts and alleys and sheltered corners, till the violence of the hurricane should be spent. The dwellers in the noble quarter of the city—that lying between the Garonne and the Jardin Royal—hearing the roar without, instinctively drew nearer, their wood-fires, shutting out the bleak, unwelcome sounds as they best might with the help of closed shutters and thick curtains.

Among all the houses in that wealthy and exclusive quarter there was not one which had a pleasanter drawing-room than Mrs. Russell's on the first floor of the Hôtel St. Jean, Rue des Cousteliers. There was many a drawing-room in which greater splendor of carving and gilding and upholstery prevailed—some few, perhaps, possessing greater length of floor and height of ceiling; but in Mrs. Russell's drawing-room there was, besides a great deal that was pretty, quaint, or valuable, that atmosphere of home that a room can only get by being lived in daily, and used as if it belonged to its mistress, instead of being kept as a state-room for the reception of visitors, with blinds drawn down and furniture in strict order.

The furniture in this room was a curious conglomeration. Scarcely a chair or a table matched. There were Japan tables and cabinets filled with hideous and valuable ornaments, and there were tables and cabinets of Florentine mosaic, and copies in alabaster of the famous antiques, such as one sees by thousands in Rome and Florence. Side by side with ancient high-backed chairs stood couches of the latest Paris make, whereon a visitor might recline and admire oak carving at his ease, with a feeling of thankfulness that his own back was not being tortured by the bosses and foliage which our forefathers' backs had to lean against. Old pictures hung on the walls, reflected in the Louis Quinze mirrors which reach-

ed from floor to ceiling; an old gilt clock stood on the mantel-piece, flanked by a couple of Dresden shepherdesses. The room was, moreover, filled with the perfume of the violets and gardenias for which Toulouse is so famous, and which have earned for her the name of "The City of Flowers."

Mrs. Russell was a little woman, most beautifully formed, with the hand and foot of a fairy, a sweet white and pink complexion, dark violet eyes and a profusion of curls, so white that she looked like a powered marquise as she sat nestled in her low chair, enveloped in the luxuriant folds of a black velvet dress. She was one of those ethereal-looking creatures who live and move as if a mere breath would completely annihilate them, but who nevertheless contrive to get their own way, and who rule despotically over their husbands and children.

Mrs. Russell had ruled despotically over her husband, Captain Russell, while he lived. He was dead now; he had died at Pau when his eldest boy, Harry, was just old enough to enter the navy. Perhaps, if he had lived, his wife would have wished to see Harry in the army rather than in the navy, and would have been pretty certain to carry out her wish. But almost with his last breath Captain Russell had expressed a hope that Harry would enter the navy; and his wife for once put her own ideas on the point of a profession aside, and followed those of the husband who had been so indulgent to hers during his lifetime. Alfred, the baby and the pet, had grown up to idolize his sailor-brother, and had declared, as soon as he could lisp, that he too would be a sailor. Harry was a lieutenant now, and sometimes Mrs. Russell looked forward as in a dream to a time when her younger son should be a mid on board the vessel of which the elder was captain.

She was not thinking of her sons just now as she sat looking at the fire, but of her only daughter Estelle, who had found out that she had a will of her own, and was likely to give her some trouble in consequence.

Estelle was standing a little way off in the shade. She was very unlike her mother, although there was that undefinable likeness that is never seen except in parent and child. The mother's face was full of life, full of delicate coloring; the daughter's deathly pale, and still as the face of a statue. Yet it was a kind sweet face in spite of its statueque expression; and there was a wonderful charm in it when she looked up. For then a pair of liquid gray eyes were visible; deep, grave, honest eyes, like their owner. They look-

ed a speaker full in the face, neither staring nor affectedly modest, but with that childlike gaze that is too innocent to be bashful. The only thing striking about her was a profusion of brown hair wound round her head, and a certain regal way she had of standing and entering a room. One other thing, though not striking, was remarkable, as possibly conveying an indication of disposition, and this was her extreme plainness of dress. She had not a single ornament on of any kind, nor any of the ends of bright ribbon that girls delight in; a Quakeress might have worn her gown, but a Quakeress could scarcely have stood up in it in such queenly fashion.

She stood before her mother now, as a royal lady might stand before a tribunal—firm, quiet, conscious of innocence, yet a little tremulous. Her eyes were fixed on a letter which she held in her hand. None could have guessed how beneath that quiet exterior a heart was throbbing.

"Very tiresome, very pertinacious," said Mrs. Russell. "Let me see what he says."

"Please, mamma, it is my own letter," said Estelle.

"Give it to me immediately," said her mother, turning round to look at her. "I have a right to see what he says. It was very impertinent of him to write to you at all."

The girl's face changed. Something like a smile broke over it as her mother pronounced the word "impertinent."

"Impertinent! Why, he loves me," she thought. But she said nothing.

"Estelle, give me that letter." Mrs. Russell did not raise her voice in the least, but there was that in her tone which warned her daughter not to trespass further on her patience. Her lip quivered as she gave the letter into her mother's hand.

Mrs. Russell just glanced over the sheet, smiled contemptuously, and gave it back.

"Sad stuff," she said; "I think I should burn it if I were you. I don't want to blame you, my dear, you can't help it; but it is provoking when a man won't take 'No' for an answer. I told him when he wrote me that silly letter two years ago, that I had quite other views with regard to you. I never met with any one so unreasonable!"

"Perhaps that is because he likes me," said Estelle, with a sweet smile and a soft flush that flitted across her face and left it pale again.

"Oh, I dare say," replied Mrs. Russell, shrugging her shoulders. "But when a man has been refused already in the most decided manner, he has no right to persist in paying attentions which he knows to be distasteful; especially when the motives on which the refusal was based still continue in full force. Is he at all more capable of keeping a wife now than he was two years ago? I dare say he lives up to his income, whatever that may be, and is in debt besides. That is just the way with young men, and I don't suppose him to be wiser than his generation."

"Mamma! I am sure Louis is too honorable to run into debt."

"Be good enough to call Mr. Vivian by his surname," interposed the mother, in a tone of freezing dignity. "Girls are so apt to take things for granted. Pray how do you know he is not in debt?"

"I know that he is a true gentleman."

Mrs. Russell laughed. "Is that all?" she said.

"Why, his father was a true gentleman, every inch, and what did he do? First ran through his own small fortune, and then married a horrid Irishwoman, a merchant's daughter, and ran through hers. She thought it a fine thing, no doubt, to marry a baronet's brother, but I believe she repented the match when all her money was gone. As it was, you know, she couldn't have educated her son at all without Sir George's help. It was Sir George who sent him to college; he told me so himself. Of course," said Mrs. Russell, in conclusion, "he is well connected on the father's side, but he has not the shadow of an expectation, and his mother is a most insufferable woman. I couldn't think of the connection for one moment."

"But, mamma, Lou— Mr. Vivian, I mean—is so good and clever: and he has cared for me so long—so long," she repeated, with a plaintive little sigh. "And yet he might have preferred many another girl, more attractive than I am."

"And how do you know that he has not?"

"Mamma, I am sure, I am certain," she cried, raising her head proudly. "I can trust him as I would myself. I believe in him."

"I believe in him!" For one moment her eyes flashed defiance on her mother and the whole world.

Mrs. Russell met the glance steadily, and as steadily looked it down.

"Don't look like that at me, if you please. You forget yourself."

Estelle's head sank. She could not withstand her mother's cool, firm look, and that Mrs. Russell knew. From her childhood Estelle had been repressed thus. Mrs. Russell had thereby saved herself an infinitude of useless and wearisome discussions. Why talk, when a look answered the purpose? So she looked her daughter down, and then turned to the fire, and went on as if there had been no interruption:

"After all, supposing him to be the model of constancy you picture to yourself, I see no great merit in it. I suppose he has sense enough to see that a girl of your stamp is a rarity nowadays. You have been particularly well educated, and are rather ultra-refined than otherwise; and I dare say he appreciates all that. If he had any thing like a fortune, I think I like him well enough to let you marry him. But he is poor, and, for all I see, likely to remain poor. And so it won't do. No. With your advantages you ought to make a brilliant marriage. I look forward to seeing you one of the queens of society."

"But," remonstrated the daughter "I don't want to be a queen of society. I think such a life would be very wearisome indeed. I should not mind living in a small house, or not having a carriage. We have one, and see how often we walk in preference to driving. No; I should not mind being poor, if—if my husband loved me."

Mrs. Russell's fairy-like foot beat a fairy tattoo on the parquet. Her daughter's obstinacy tried her patience sorely. If she had withstood her in this manner in the days of frocks and pinafores, she would have boxed her ears soundly and sent her to bed. But Estelle was nearly eighteen, and besides was too tall to have her ears boxed conveniently. Mrs. Russell was obliged to talk to her now, which was far more troublesome and less summary.

"You will be incredulous!" she said. "Shall

I tell you what your life will be, if you marry a poor man? You will be obliged to rise early and go to bed late. You will be forced to occupy yourself with a thousand tiresome domestic details; you will have to mend stockings, for instance, and—"

"Oh," Estelle cried, gleefully, "I should enjoy mending his socks above all things!"

"Don't interrupt when I am speaking," said Mrs. Russell, more and more annoyed. "Your husband will come home fagged and cross—men are always cross when they are hungry—and you will have no dainty dinner to set before him, such as you get here every day. You will have nothing but cold mutton, or greasy chops. Poor people can't have made dishes."

"But I would take care that the chops were not greasy. Why should chops be greasy?" Estelle persisted.

"Because it is the nature of chops, that's all. I thought I begged you not to interrupt me. Well, to grace your dinner, you will be there with a haggard, sallow face. Remember, a poor man's wife won't be able to afford pretty new dinner-dresses. He will observe the difference, and think how well-dressed the girl was, and wonder why the wife should look so shabby. Perhaps he will think you don't care about pleasing him. That, you may be sure, won't improve his temper. In the evening, if he is not cross, he will be sleepy or busy; in either case, no companion for you. I am supposing you the wife of a professional man; a barrister, like Mr. Vivian, for instance—by-the-by, mind you burn that letter of his. Well, if you have a family, there will be the worry of not being able to bring them up nicely for want of money, and of knowing besides that your husband's death would bring beggary—"

"Mamma, mamma," cried Estelle, "it could not, would not be so bad as that!"

Mrs. Russell went on:

"Of course you may suppose that my supporting a widowed daughter with any amount of grandchildren is utterly out of the question."

"But, mamma, of course we should not marry immediately. I always looked forward to waiting several years. And I don't care how long I wait—for him."

"Estelle," said her mother, solemnly, "you don't know what you are saying. If I really thought you capable of such a mad act as marrying Mr. Vivian, I should break my heart. And what on earth can you see in him?"

"I like him," Estelle replied, obstinately.

"What has that to do with my question?" groaned the mother, in despair. "Like him! I am sure he is the ugliest man I ever saw!"

"I know he is ugly, but I don't mind that at all. And he likes me."

"But he is so shy, so uncouth; and he has such horrid ugly hands."

"And the ugly hands can write beautiful things, mamma!" The girl's courage rose again as she thought of all that those ugly hands had done, and would do yet.

"What should you know about it?"

"He showed me part of an essay he was writing—that was when we were at Caunterets, two summers ago; when you sprained your ankle, and had to lie on the sofa so long. I did not understand much till he explained to me, but when I did understand, I thought it, oh, so beautiful!

Ah," she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "he is so clever! I believe he knows every thing. I think he will be Lord Chancellor one day!"

It was not the least use to look at her. The girl was for the moment quite beyond the reach of Gorgon glances. And, as we have said, she was too tall to have her ears boxed. Mrs. Russell waited a little to give her time to cool, and then went on:

"What nonsense! He is the merest book-worm. He is shy and uncomfortable in society; only at home amongst musty old tomes, or among men as uncouth as himself. And I tell you again," Mrs. Russell continued, angrily, "his mother is a low, vulgar woman, a Dissenter; and all her relations are Dissenters, as far as I know—vulgar, at any rate. And I declare I would rather you remained single than have to blush for such a connection as your marriage with Mr. Vivian would bring on me. I could never bear the disgrace, the mortification of the thing. It would be my death-blow."

"Oh, mamma darling, don't say that!" Estelle cried, with tears in her eyes.

"I repeat, it would be my death-blow. There, I have done. If you *will* marry him, you know the consequences. It is a little hard that my only daughter should be the one to break my heart and disgrace herself for the sake of satisfying a silly, girlish whim. After my bringing you up with such care—to distress me so cruelly." And Mrs. Russell retired behind a Valenciennes handkerchief, and shed some very genuine tears of vexation.

For Louis Vivian's sake, Estelle could bear a good deal of lecturing, but her courage failed her when she saw her mother weep.

"You know, mamma, that I never could do any thing to break your heart."

She turned to leave the room, not trusting herself to say more. As she did so, the door opened, and the rustle of a silk dress was heard. Mrs. Russell looked up. She was not sorry for the interruption.

"Is that you, Julia?" she asked, pleasantly. "I have scarcely seen you for the day. Come and sit by me, and let me hear what you have been doing with yourself."

The young lady thus addressed stood one moment holding the door-curtain in her hand before she entered the room. Casting a sharp glance from mother to daughter, she endeavored from the expression of their faces to get some clue to the subject of the conversation her arrival had interrupted. In this she was disappointed. Estelle left the room, preserving her usual quiet bearing, and Mrs. Russell had banished all traces of emotion from her voice and countenance simultaneously with the entrance of her visitor. She lay back in her chair, playing absently with a fire-screen while she listened to the long list of nothings which went to fill up Miss Julia Maurice's day.

CHAPTER II.

JULIA MAURICE.

FOR some half-dozen seasons or more had Julia Maurice been the acknowledged belle of her neighborhood. When I inform my readers that this neighborhood was that part of South

Devon famous alike for the beauty of its girls and the splendor of its roses, it will be clear to them that Julia, to have so steadily kept her ground against all applicants for the palm of sovereignty, must have possessed beauty of no common order. She was the spoilt child of a large family of girls, of whom one was her elder. The rest, four in number, were waiting more or less patiently in the school-room till their sister should be settled. For Admiral Maurice dreaded nothing so much as a bevy of unmarried daughters, all out, and all hanging on his hands. To have to pay for ball-dresses for one girl at a time was quite enough, said he. Henrietta, the eldest daughter was a very plain, sober woman. She dressed like a dowdy, and never went anywhere except to church. She lived by rule, fasted, and read portions from a manual of devotion at stated hours of the day. She was very stupid, Julia thought; and in nothing did she show it more plainly than in giving half her allowance to the poor, and making a guy of herself: for the allowance was not more than sufficed for dressing respectably, scarcely that. Between these two sisters there was not a thought in common. Julia, to use her own phrase, had been too much for her mother ever since the age of twelve. By the time she was twenty, her authority was completely established in the house. Her mother was afraid of her, and kept out of her way whenever she could. In the winter she was constrained to attend her to balls and parties. But even there she scarcely saw her. Julia generally vanished with the first waltz. "Stay where you are, mamma," she would say, "and then I shall know where to find you." So Mrs. Maurice would sit still till the end of the evening, or till any time that her daughter chose to return home; and if she ventured to ask whether she had enjoyed herself, she was told briefly that people couldn't bear being asked questions when they were sleepy.

Julia had many female acquaintances, but not one friend. Women feared and hated her. Malice and envy rose rampant at her approach; and for good reason. Girls knew they must resign their admirers, or be thankful at best for small scraps of attention, as long as she was in the way. If one more daring than the rest tried to set her and her wiles at defiance, she only got laughed at for her pains. The more prudent resigned themselves without a struggle, and repaired the mischief afterwards if they could. Mothers and daughters stigmatized her conduct as "shameful," "bold," "unfeminine;" and old maids passed with averted faces and noses high in the air, as Julia, dressed in the extreme of fashion, and followed by her *inamorati*, trailed her long skirts up and down the esplanade on a sunny afternoon.

There had been a pleasant excitement in this at first, but now she was getting tired of it all, even of being admired. For the admiration, whether spontaneous or not, never came to any thing. Not that she had not had offers. She had had plenty, and kept a list of them in her pocket-book. She had been engaged, too, but it had generally been for so short a time that before people could begin to talk about the engagement, it was already a thing of the past. She corresponded secretly with a man in India, a third cousin, who had been very much in love with her, and whom she intended to take as being bet-

ter than nobody, unless she could get any one who would be more to her mind before his regiment was ordered home. Nobody much more suitable had offered as yet, and she was beginning to get terribly tired of her life. A dim consciousness haunted her sometimes that she would not always be young and beautiful. Henrietta, to be sure, was older, but, as she never would go out, she was no good as a foil. And Lizzie, the eldest of the four girls still in the school-room, was growing alarmingly handsome, and could not be kept in the background much longer. She thought sometimes now that it was folly in a woman not to hook a rich lover, and hold him fast, after she had passed the age of one-and-twenty.

How this bright provincial star should have wandered so far out of her sphere requires a word of explanation.

Shows, fêtes, and archery meetings had abounded during the preceding season, and Julia, as usual, had shone supreme. But the summer was a very wet one, and more than one *fête champêtre* had begun and ended amid torrents of rain, which had penetrated impervious marquises, spoilt bonnets, put hair out of curl, and given chaperons the rheumatism. Worse than that, three of the prettiest girls, creatures so lovely that even Julia herself was forced to admire them, had succumbed to the combined influence of late hours and exposure to wet. Their first season had proved their last. Hardened pleasure-seeker as she was, Julia had not escaped. A cold which she had chosen to make light of settled on the chest, and the family physician had ordered repose, and a milder climate for the forthcoming winter. Mrs. Maurice had written to her old school-friend, Mrs. Russell, begging her to receive her daughter. Mrs. Russell had assented, and had taken the trouble to go herself as far as Paris to meet her. And this was how Julia came to be at Toulouse.

She was undeniably beautiful. Women, hating her after their kind, criticised her color: hinted that it was put on—which it was not—said that her under-lip was too full, the lower jaw too thick, that she had a double, yes, a very decided double chin, and a marking of dusky down at the angle of her short upper-lip. But, depreciate as they might, there was no denying that Julia's mouth, with all its faults, was the veriest rosebud of a mouth, or that her eyes were as dark and as bright as an Indian's, or that sonnets might have been written to her delicately-pencilled eyebrow. When her female critics had picked her to pieces to the best of their ability, they would sum up by saying she was a gentleman's beauty.

To spite critics, old and young, this undeniable fact remained—she was as splendid a piece of coloring as could be met with off canvas. A trifle too showy in her dress, maybe; too fond of glitter and rustle—of rings, and pins, and bracelets, and chains; too partial to pink streamers and such-like furbelows. So thought Mrs. Russell, as she looked at Julia sitting opposite with the light of fire and lamp full on her, and mentally contrasting this "loud" style of dress with her own daughter's quiet costume. But Mrs. Russell did as every one did—wound up by confessing to herself that Julia was a splendid creature.

Meanwhile, Estelle had retreated to her own

room, and had locked the door, that she might read her beloved letter over again without interruption. As she read it, the sadness of heart caused by her mother's last words vanished, and she grew hopeful and buoyant again. It seemed very easy to wait. Even during those two years which had elapsed since last she had seen Louis Vivian, the waiting had not been very hard. She had trusted him so completely, that but few of the pangs of uncertainty, or that undefinable jealousy generally supposed to be an accompaniment of true love, had ever had place in her bosom. Now that he had written to her, she felt that there would never more be cause even for uncertainty. She felt that to doubt him would be a cruel insult, and a flaw in her love for him. She put aside her mother's asseveration. She could not really mean that she would break her heart, the girl thought. And even if she did mean it, when she saw they were both in earnest, she would relent, and let them be happy, and write to each other, and see each other sometimes, and marry when she was old enough, and when Louis had position enough. She would begin now to prepare herself for being a poor man's wife. She would ask Lisette, her maid, to teach her how to cut out her clothes, and how to darn stockings neatly. She felt rather ashamed of having disliked needlework so much hitherto. Julia was very clever with her needle, and she had thought her much given to waste time over intricate pieces of work: she would take example by her in future, and learn to do such things for herself. "After all," she thought, "making and mending clothes can not be very disagreeable work when one has learnt how to do it properly; and if it were, I should not mind doing it for him. I should enjoy mending his socks."

She rose and looked at herself in the glass. It was no passing vanity, but merely a wish to know whether her face looked the same as it had done two years ago, when she had seen her last of Louis Vivian. "How sad it would be if he were to come back and not know me!" she thought. And she decided that she would not alter the fashion of her hair, and frizzle and roll it up as Julia did, and as Julia was always wishing she would, but keep to the old way, the coronet of braided hair, and the thick coils wound round and round the back of her head—the way he loved.

She sat for nearly an hour, and might have sat longer, thinking of that pleasant summer in the Pyrenees which had given a coloring to her young life; but her reverie was rudely broken by a beating at her door, and a shrill child's voice crying:

"Mamma says you are to come immediately. Tea is nearly over."

She unbolted the door, and her brother Alfred burst in. He was about ten years old, and a great plague to the maids, to Estelle, and sometimes to his mother. The maids were wont to express their opinion of his peccadilloes pretty freely, even before mademoiselle: French servants have that habit. Estelle would reprove them, and defend Alfred, though he plagued her as much as any one. She tried sometimes to make him behave properly, but her efforts were always snubbed by Mrs. Russell, who could see no fault in the child as long as he did not disobey her direct commands. She would complain of her daughter's hardness and want of consideration,

and wonder plaintively what would become of the dear boy if his mother were to die. And Estelle, awed by allusions to such a terrible loss, would then take herself severely to task, reproach herself with having been a monster of cruelty, and, by way of expiation, would let Alfred ride roughshod over her likes and dislikes for an indefinite length of time.

The young gentleman burst in headlong as soon as his sister had unbolted the door. This was not, however, till she had put away Mr. Vivian's letter in a sandal-wood box where she kept her few treasures: a locket containing her father's hair; a faded mountain-flower which Louis Vivian had climbed to get for her; a scrap of one of his manuscripts, much blotted and corrected; and, lastly, a small roll of drawing-paper, on which was a crayon sketch of a man's head. This was a likeness of Louis Vivian which she had drawn from memory. She took one peep at it. "Yes," she said aloud, "it is like you, dear, dear Louis." Then laying the letter for one moment to her cheek and lips, she put it into the box, which she hastily locked, for her brother was still beating impatiently at the door.

"You are to come into the drawing-room immediately," said Alfred, as he burst in. And then he walked up to the dressing-table, and helped himself plentifully to his sister's eau-de-cologne.

"Oh, Alfred! you know that is only allowed on Sundays."

"Just this once. I've been kept in to-day, so you ought to give me a treat."

"Kept in again!" sighed Estelle. Alfred was a day-scholar at the Imperial Lycée, and but few days passed without his incurring detention for some breach of Lycée discipline. This was a trouble to his sister, although she endeavored to believe that his constantly getting himself into small scrapes was merely, as Mrs. Russell declared it to be, the natural rebelliousness of English high spirit against French military discipline. All she could do in the matter was to see that he prepared his lessons properly, so that at the end of the month bad marks for conduct might be balanced by good ones for lessons.

"Yes," Alfred went on: "Jean Coqueril made a long nose at me while the arithmetic lesson was going on, and I made a face at him. Then the master looked his way, so that he could not make a face back again; so, in revenge, when we went to play he called me a great calf and a great baby, and said I might be a prize at the next cattle fair. Of course, as an English boy, I couldn't stand that, you know, so I knocked him down and made his nose bleed; and then he cried and went and told the usher, though I offered to let him fight me if he liked. The usher said I was to be kept in, of course; and Jean Marie had to wait twenty minutes when he came to fetch me."

Boys attending either public or private schools in France must always be accompanied to and fetched from school by a servant, parent, or other person authorized. This rule is invariably enforced, whatever the age of the pupil. The older, the more liable to run into mischief, they say.

"Where have you been?" Mrs. Russell inquired coldly, when her daughter re-entered the drawing-room. Estelle replied timidly that she had been in her own room, and drank her tea

hastily, for old Jean Marie was waiting to take the tray away.

"I can not have the servants hindered in their work in this way," Mrs. Russell said. Jean Marie had been waiting two minutes perhaps.

Estelle blushed guiltily. Her mother looked at her (or she thought she did) as if she knew what she had been doing in her own room—dreaming over her love-letter instead of burning it, as Mrs. Russell had contemptuously advised. She felt uncomfortable, and shrank away from the lamplight till her tell-tale cheeks should cool. But Julia Maurice was unwittingly the means of restoring her to her mother's good graces. There was to be a ball at the Prefecture, a Mid-Lent ball, and Julia had declared her intention of having a new dress for it, even if she went into debt.

To hear such an intention announced with a frankness that left no doubt as to whether Miss Maurice meant to carry it out was sufficiently alarming to Mrs. Russell. It occurred to her that she had not given her daughter the best possible companion in a girl who thought so lightly of going into debt; who absolutely used slang expressions too, and called getting into debt "out-running the constable."

"I can not see what you want of a new dress," she said, severely. "And I do not like to hear young ladies talk slang."

"Oh, slang is quite the proper thing, you know," said Julia, unabashed.

"In certain circles, perhaps," said Mrs. Russell, with a contemptuous movement of her head—not a toss—and an emphasis on the word "certain" strong enough to annoy Julia. It said quite plainly, "My dear child, you are socially inferior to me and mine."

"Anyhow, I am going to have a new dress," Julia said. In her turn she hoped to annoy Mrs. Russell. "Tit for tat, my old lady," she thought.

"If you really must, though I see no necessity for it myself, you had better have it at my milliner's, or I will lend you the money. But I beg that you will not leave bills while you are staying with me."

The tone of admonition was a little too much for Julia. "Of course I don't want to run into debt," she said, "not if I can help it. But what is a girl to do? One must dress, you know, if one goes out. And the guv—papa, that is—is the stingiest old screw you ever saw." All this in a tone of apology.

Mrs. Russell elevated her eyebrows and took up the newspaper, inwardly thanking Heaven that, after all, her daughter was not as other women's daughters. And then they worked and read in silence till bed-time. Julia sat up till two o'clock, reading a highly-flavored novel of Dumas; and Estelle, with her letter under her pillow, slept and dreamt of Louis Vivian.

CHAPTER III.

HUGUENOTS AT HOME.

It was the day after the Mid-Lent ball. Julia Maurice had figured thereat in a new dress, as she had declared beforehand. She had also danced all the round dances, partly to gratify her own liking of them, partly to annoy Mrs. Rus-

sell, whose opinion it was that a young lady of birth and breeding should restrict herself to quadrilles, except at very small and select parties. Julia, who thought Mrs. Russell a sort of ogress as regarded the proprieties, made the most of such small methods of asserting her English independence as lay in her way. It had been a great satisfaction to her to look over her shoulder, as she whirled down the room, and see Estelle sitting by her mother in a plain white muslin. There was, however, one drawback to her satisfaction; Estelle had a string of pearls round her neck, the like of which Julia knew she could never hope to possess, unless, indeed, as she said to herself, she had the luck of marrying a rich man; and of such luck she saw no present prospect.

They had another party this night, although Mid-Lent was over, and Lenten practices were supposed to be in full force again.

This, however, was quite a different sort of party to the Catholic parties. As far as the practice of mortification went, this was as Lenten a party as any one could wish. At any time of year Mrs. Russell would have found it a severe mortification. This was a working party, whereat the ladies belonging to the Reformed faith at Toulouse took their pleasure grimly, and helped forward their cause by preparing for the annual charity bazar. The only scope for female competition at these parties lay in the beauty and fineness of the work; no fine dressing was allowed.

Even Julia, awed for once by Mrs. Russell's stern dictum, put on a plain dark dress, and consoled herself for having to cover up her neck and arms—necks and arms were an abomination to the pastors—by doubling the quantity of rings on her fingers and bracelets on her wrists. Mrs. Russell looked at her as she entered the room thus bedizened, but said nothing. She felt a sort of contemptuous pity for the bad taste her guest displayed, and again thanked Heaven that her daughter Estelle was not like other women's daughters.

They went down stairs, across the court, and then passed down the cloister, Mathurine, Mrs. Russell's maid, going before with a lamp. Grim and dark the cloister was now, grim and dark as it had been in the days when the Knights of St. John had walked up and down the broad flags. Their glory had departed; their hotel, once the most splendid establishment in that part of France, was subdivided, and turned into private dwellings; a cloth-market was held at stated intervals under the silent arcades. Turning out of the cloister, Mrs. Russell and her companions arrived at an arched doorway, beyond which was a flight of steep stone stairs. These being mounted, they reached a second archway and a second flight of stone stairs, steeper than the first, unswept and dilapidated. Then they came to a long vaulted corridor, at the end of which was a doorway. Across this doorway hung a leathern curtain, which being drawn aside revealed a distant glimmer of light and a confused sound of voices. This was Madame Fleury's house, where the working party was being held. At the drawing-room door appeared Madame Fleury herself, "got up" in a style befitting the leader of the Protestant community of Toulouse. Madame Fleury courtesied low, shook hands, kissed them

all three on both cheeks, and led Mrs. Russell to an arm-chair at the upper end of the room, where the married ladies were congregated. Estelle and Julia staid behind; arm-chairs were not for them, and every other chair seemed occupied.

"Come here; I have kept seats for you," cried a lively black-eyed girl, Madame Fleury's niece, Mathilde. Estelle beckoned to Julia, and they got into the vacant space pointed out by Mademoiselle Mathilde, and looked around them.

It was a handsome room enough—rather dark and heavy, perhaps, but not bare and cold looking, as most French drawing-rooms are in winter. There were three large tables set out in a row, garnished with a number of moderator lamps with shades, and round every lamp sat a cluster of ladies, old, young, and middle-aged, altogether some thirty and forty in number, very busy at their needles, and nearly all chattering like magpies. Heaps of work lay about in dire confusion.

"Is all this to be done to-night?" said Julia, pointing to the work, and addressing Estelle in English.

"No," Estelle said; "some of it will be taken home, and brought back to the next meeting, or when finished."

And then, resolutely refusing the flower-work which Mademoiselle Mathilde proposed, she chose some hemming. It was very hard stuff that she had to work upon, and she pricked her fingers and broke her needle. But she did not mind that: for she intended to be severely practical in all housewifely matters now, for Louis Vivian's sake.

Julia had seen Mademoiselle Mathilde once or twice when she had come with her aunt to visit Mrs. Russell. She had an idea that the French girl admired her. She turned to her graciously, and made a remark on her work. Mademoiselle Mathilde did admire the brilliant English girl very much. She almost envied her her wonderful color. That brown dress, very like her own, only heightened the beauty of Miss Maurice's complexion. Poor Mathilde could tell well enough by her glass what the russet silk did for her. And her aunt had made her take the earrings from her ears that evening, because the pastor was coming!

"Have you danced much this winter?" said Julia.

"Julia Cazères—our pastor, that is—does not approve of dancing. Do you know him? He has been at Montauban for his health. He preaches beautifully."

"I have not met him," said Julia. "What a charming little opera-house you have here! They say the performances have been better than usual this Lent. Have you been to see *Les Trois Nicolas* yet?"

"I have never been near the place!" answered the French girl, with an undisguised look of horror. For Monsieur Fleury was a burning and a shaming light in Toulouse, and public amusements were not so much as named in his house. "Why," she continued, "the pastor would preach about it if we—if any of his flock—were to indulge in such worldly distractions."

"Fancy the pastor's interfering!" quoth Julia. "I wonder any one should put up with it. Why, you dare not call your souls your own, at that rate!"

"It is true; they are not our own," the French girl replied demurely, but in perfect good faith.

Julia wondered if all French Protestant girls were as stupid as this one. "What do you do to amuse yourselves and get through life down here?" she asked, with a yawn.

"Oh," said Mademoiselle Mathilde, hesitating, "we have a great many—I mean—we have not very many amusements. My aunt took me to see a collection of wild beasts the other day. It was very instructive; only the lion roared, and we got frightened, and came away immediately. In the summer my aunt takes me to walk in the Botanical Gardens, and we attend the botanical lectures, and the astronomical course at the Observatory. And there is the vintage in the autumn. And we work for the bazar. I like making flowers—don't you, mademoiselle?"

"Once we gave a dance at home," said Julia, "and I made every flower that decorated the rooms. It took me a week. I would not let any one help me. But I was very glad when it was done. It was something, you know, to be able to say one had done all that without any help."

"Yes," said Mathilde. And then her aunt called her to look for something, and she did not come back.

"You must not talk about dancing to Mathilde," said Estelle; "they think all that so wicked here."

"What a pack of nonsense!" said Julia. "I wonder Mrs. Russell has any thing to do with such people."

"But they are very good, and we have no right to pain them, mamma says," continued Estelle.

Which was undeniable. So Julia was silent, and worked till there was a movement and a buzz at the other end of the room; when she inquired whether the people were going.

"No, indeed; our pastor is just come," said some one near her, standing up with outstretched neck.

Julia stood up too, and sat down again, as a fat, heavy-looking man entered the room.

"So that's their pet pastor," she said to Estelle. "What a vulgar horror!"

Monsieur le Pasteur Cazères, in blissful ignorance of the verdict just pronounced on him, proceeded slowly up to the end of the room where all the elder ladies sat in arm-chairs, and where Madame Fleury was just then busily engaged in quelling a dispute between two ancient dames as to the respective merits of two dolls they were dressing for the bazar. The sight of their favorite preacher was as oil on the troubled waters. Pastor Cazères moved on, dispensing nods and smiles to his flock, and there was a movement and a buzzing behind him as he went, for he was a very great personage. He ruled with a rod of iron, and the women liked it, and bowed themselves down and—metaphorically—kissed the feet of their Protestant pope. And in no house did the pastor reign more supreme than in rich, good-natured Madame Fleury's. In the greeting between the two, the condescension was all on his side, the deference on hers. Then he turned and faced the crowd of admirers. There was a sudden "Hush!" The orator spoke, and the Frenchwomen held their tongues to listen.

"It rejoices me," said the pastor, in a full, rolling, unctuous voice—"it rejoices me, dear Christian sisters, h—m—it rejoices me to meet such a large assembly here to-night, all piously and busily employed in works of charity. H—m!"

Here the pastor produced a blue check pocket-handkerchief.

"Dear Christian friends, your privilege is sweet and precious, sweet and precious!—h—m! That which is undertaken in a spirit of humility and self-devotion must enjoy the blessing of success. H—m!"

"Dear Christian friends, it rejoices my heart to see so many of you here to-night. Bless you! Bless you all! H—m! I thank you from my heart for this welcome. It is, indeed, consoling to your pastor to find his return to the scene of his arduous labors thus hailed with joy. H—m!"

The pastor passed his blue handkerchief over his brow, stuck out his chin, and turned his eyes heavenward. A murmur of applause ran round the room. Madame Fleury, whose eyes had followed every motion of the pastoral lips, held up her hand and cried "Hush!" He was going to speak again.

"He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord: as you, dear sister Fleury, have experienced full well, for your substance has been blessed to you tenfold." Madame Fleury looked down and tried to look humble. "I am deeply thankful for the present opportunity of placing before all my dear Christian sisters the privilege of helping forward a good and great work; no less, dear friends, than the saving an immortal soul from destruction."

A murmur ran through the room.

"Yes," ejaculated Monsieur Cazères, looking steadily towards one corner of the room—"yes. There is in this very town, at this very moment, a soul—an immortal soul, to be rescued from the fangs of the Destroyer. Think, my Christian friends, an immortal soul!"

The women crowded up closer to their shepherd. Sprightly Mathilde caught hold of her aunt's arm, and looked timorously over her shoulder.

The pastor proceeded in his deepest tones:

"There is in a certain quarter of this city a poor orphan, one of our co-religionists, compelled to serve in a Catholic family for her daily bread. She is forced to keep fast-days with the rest of the family. More than that. Being asked whether she possessed a rosary, and answering in the negative, one was given her, asserted to have been blessed by the Pope. Blessed by the Man of Sin!"

"Beloved friends, reflect on that!"

"Numerous instructions were given her for using it, and the mistress of the house, in her misguided zeal, went so far as to make her repeat the prayers after her: prayers which you all know to consist of *Paters* and *Aves*, in spite of the poor orphan's reiterated assurances that she belonged to the Reformed Church."

Murmurs of sympathy ran round the room. The pastor waved his hand and proceeded:

"Further. The girl's presence is required at such times as the family unite for purposes of devotion. These devotions, so-called, consist mainly in litanies to the Virgin Mary and the saints. And if, among this crowd of intercessors,

the Most High were addressed, would not His offended Majesty refuse to hear?"

Again the room resounded with sympathetic murmurs. Again the pastor passed the blue check handkerchief over his moist brow, and cast his eyes upward. The younger ladies glanced round the room, and whispered to each other, "Dear, good Monsieur Cazères! Oh, how beautifully, how admirably he speaks! Every word is heartfelt!" The elders nodded and wiped their eyes, and wagged their heads impressively.

Descending from the sublime to the practical with the ease which belongs so peculiarly to great minds, the pastor proceeded to inquire among the devout matrons round him for one who would take his *protégée* into her household. Here he was met by an unforeseen difficulty. All the ladies present were already supplied with servants according to their needs, and there was some reluctance expressed by such of them as felt bold enough and wise enough in their own conceits to have any opinion which diverged from their pastor's, at the idea of receiving a girl with whose antecedents they were totally unacquainted, and who, while calling herself a Protestant orphan, might be an impostor, or a thief—nay, a Jesuit in disguise.

The pastor's face grew dark. He had expected his *protégée* to be received with open arms, and he could not brook this unlooked-for opposition.

In most unequivocal terms, he proceeded to denounce the coldness of heart of the rich, and was on the point of making a forcible application of the story of Dives, when Madame Fleury, whose face had become white with dread lest in his zeal the pastor should mention her by name, ventured to interrupt him, exclaiming that she would take the girl into her own household, and befriend her in any way approved by Monsieur Cazères or his colleague.

Monsieur Cazères's countenance regained its normal expression of pious self-satisfaction; his tone changed from denunciation to approbation; the rising storm was lulled.

The hum of conversation again rose, and continued until the appearance of a footman with a silver tray laden with little black books, which he handed round to the company. Then there was a sudden silence, and some people put their hands before their eyes, and assumed a devotional attitude.

"Is it good to eat?" Julia whispered to Estelle, as she took a little book from the tray.

Estelle smothered her inclination to laugh. "Hush," she said, "they are going to sing and pray. It is rather tiresome, I own; but they think it right to finish the evening so; and some of them are such good people. Please don't laugh, Julia."

But Julia did laugh. And there was a sudden "Hush!" from the upper end of the room, and somebody cried, "Young ladies!" in a warning voice. Julia stopped, and Estelle blushed deeply, and wished she had staid at home.

Monsieur Cazères now began to clear his throat as if he meant business. Madame Fleury beckoned to the footman, who brought a glass of sugared water, which she took and reverently presented to the pastor. Every body got into a seat. There was a moment's pause, and then a hymn

was given out, and sung by the entire assemblage at snail's pace, to no particular tune, and in the key best suited to the capacity of each individual throat. After this a chapter was read and expounded by the pastor. And then all rose to hear a prayer, which was the grand performance of the evening. Here Monsieur Cazères seized the precious opportunity of making special allusions to topics connected with the Reformed interest, as well as of reminding Providence of long-standing individual claims to some peculiar mark of favor. Madame Fleury, being the wife of the most influential member of the community, as well as the hostess of the evening, came in for the lion's share of recommendation to Divine favor; a recommendation indorsed by the pastor, who doubtless knew what he was about, by the text, "To him that hath shall be given."

Some men whine when they pray, as though they hoped to wheedle the Almighty into granting His favors. Some shout as though He were deaf. Some adopt a bullying tone. Monsieur Cazères's manner was peculiarly his own; he addressed the Deity as if he were on excellent terms with Him, and didn't care who knew it.

Julia had at first been as much amused with the evening's proceedings as she would have been at a drawing-room farce. But Monsieur Cazères's prayer seemed interminable; and she, bold as she was, did not venture to giggle while the eyes of forty Protestant ladies were on her. She stood first on one foot, then on the other, and yawned behind her hymn-book. Estelle stood patient and quiet. She was willing to help the Protestant ladies in their work, and give her pocket-money to their charities; but she could not believe in their pastor, hang on every word that fell from his lips, and treasure them up in her mind, as her neighbors did. She disliked Monsieur Cazères. She thought him unrefined, discourteous at times, overbearing. But at the same time she was sorry to think so, and quite willing to suppose that she set too much store by what he would have called "snares," "worldly subtleties."

But Monsieur Cazères's prayer, like other exercises, came to an end at last. The "amen" sounded out, and was re-echoed, and the ladies turned to the work-tables, and began collecting their scattered property. Estelle breathed freely again. After hearing Madame Fleury's name mentioned, she had listened with burning cheeks fearing to hear her mother's, for Mrs. Russell had shortly before made a handsome donation to the orphanage. She turned after her companions, and began folding up her work.

The footman reappeared with the tray, laden with cakes instead of hymn-books. After him came a demure waiting-woman, in a stiff goffered cap and muslin apron, carrying a tea-tray, which she placed before her mistress. Madame Fleury filled the cups, which were then carried round by Monsieur Fleury and two other gentlemen, who had hitherto remained invisible. Monsieur Cazères, with a cup in his hand, glanced at the group of girls sitting a little on one side. His discriminating eye singled out Julia, and he honored her by walking across the room and presenting her with a cup of Madame Fleury's weak tea.

Julia received her diluted portion with a freezing bow. Adolphe Gustave Cazères, member of

the Protestant College at Montauban, and head pastor of the Temple Évangélique at Toulouse, was absolutely nothing more in her eyes than a vulgar dissenting preacher—a man whom the admiral would not have allowed inside his doors!

But she looked so handsome, in spite of her ill-humor, that the pastor set himself to play the agreeable to this perverse Anglican sheep; to the wonder and disgust of the junior members of his own flock, whose piercing southern glances fell with unconcealed ill-will on the beautiful stranger on whom their shepherd thus deigned to cast the light of his countenance. For one of them to have been the object of such attention would have been sufficient to raise up mingled envy and admiration in all her companions' bosoms. Each member of the youthful band would have striven, by her lamb-like demeanor, to be the next to secure a kind word—a moment's conversation—with the pastor-orator. But for him to select a stranger, an Englishwoman, who so seldom gave herself the trouble of attending divine service at the temple; who now scarcely condescended to speak to Monsieur Cazères, or even to give him a civil look; this truly was a grievance almost too great to be borne!

Julia herself would willingly have transferred the pastor's attentions to the members of his own flock. Had he been a dainty English clergyman, one of those who cultivate flowing whiskers and a soft tenor voice, who rejoice in snow-white hands with filbert nails, speak in confidential undertones, wear silken cassocks and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, she might, although she by no means affected clergymen, have listened to him, or even flirted with him for want of a better.

But this man! Angels and ministers of grace defend her from him!

This Calvinist—fat, awkward, ugly; with immense hands sprawling about as if they did not belong to him; gloveless hands, with black, ill-shapen nails; nails that had never made acquaintance with perfumed Paris toilet soaps at three francs the cake—this provincial Boanerges, whose hair niggardly Nature had caused to grow straight and wiry, and in whose face was collected all possible heaviness, sanctimoniousness, and self-laudation! This fright dared play the agreeable!

The English belle just gave him one look, as he bent over her with an air of patronage, and laid down her cup with a lady-like gesture of dissatisfaction.

"You find the tea too strong," exclaimed Pastor Cazères. "Ah! this dear Madame Fleury always makes it so. Every thing in her house is of the best. But young ladies' nerves must be considered. Allow me, mademoiselle, to take back your cup for some hot water." And Monsieur Cazères hurried away in search of it.

"Good gracious!" cried Julia, in English; "why, 'tis hot water already! Estelle, does the wretch expect me to drink it?"

Estelle could not speak for laughing.

"My dear young ladies," cried Madame Fleury, rushing up with great impetuosity, and followed at a soberer pace by the pastor with the tea-cup and an earthen pot containing lukewarm water. "My dear young friends, our good pastor has been scolding me for making the tea too strong. I thought, indeed, that you English liked it very black; though I myself consider it most hurtful

to the nerves and the complexion. Is this made-moiselle's cup? Allow me. Dear Mees Estelle, your cup, too, please. Ah, Madame Roussel, do you abandon us already? But indeed it is quite early."

"My young people were up dancing till late last night," replied Mrs. Russell, who approached just in time to see Estelle swallow the aqueous contents of her tea-cup with a face of comic resignation.

"Madame should not hurry her young ladies away. They are better employed this evening than they were yesterday," said Monsieur Cazères, severely.

Mrs. Russell bowed haughtily. "I am perfectly satisfied at the manner in which my daughter disposes of her time."

"Your daughter, madame," continued the pastor, uncompromisingly, "has a soul to be saved—or lost."

"I am aware of the fact, thank you," said Mrs. Russell, frigidly.

Madame Fleury broke in, in fear and trembling, "Dear madame, dear mademoiselle, do take another cup. Monsieur Cazères, would you fetch a cup for madame? Would you bring me the tea-pot here?"

The English ladies declined, and with a profusion of deep courtesies took their leave, and threaded their way back through the long passages, down the stone stairs, and across the court, again, preceded by the demure waiting-maid in the gaffered cap carrying a candle.

Alfred burst out on them as soon as they got to Mrs. Russell's private staircase. "Harry is come, and he's got big whiskers, and he said I might get up and keep him company." And then he vanished, being in very airy costume.

"Monsieur is come," said Mathurine, appearing with a light, and a broad grin on her yellow face. Mrs. Russell ran up-stairs with a joyful exclamation, and was met by a handsome, hairy, sunburnt youth, who bent himself down to receive her maternal embrace, and then lifted her by the waist, and carried her into the drawing-room as if she had been a small parcel.

"Put me down, you saucy boy!" cried his mother, greatly delighted.

"You dearest of little mothers! How many hearts have been broken since last I had the pleasure of seeing you?" asked Harry Russell.

"Put me down this instant, sir!" cried Mrs. Russell.

"Give us another kiss," said her son. "You are so pretty, by Jove! I shall be having a stepfather if I don't look out." This was an old joke of his.

"Harry! you are incorrigible. Put me down. There is a young lady here to whom you must be introduced."

Harry dropped his mother on to the floor, and encased himself in his quarter-deck propriety in less time than it takes to write.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he said, blushing through his brown skin. Julia was not in the room, however. She had retired to her own room to examine whether her head-dress had been disarranged by the hood.

"Darling old fellow!" cried Estelle, throwing her arms round her brother. "How handsome you have grown. Give me a good kiss!"

"All right; another time, when we're alone,

dear. I hate embracing in public. There, there, that will do." For Julia had entered.

Estelle drew back mortified. "I beg your pardon," she said. "But I was so glad to see you." And then Mrs. Russell inquired about his journey.

"Monsieur is served," said Jean Marie, the factotum of the house, who made a military salute as he spoke. Jean Marie was an old soldier.

"Come with me, Pussy-cat," said Harry. Pussy-cat was his pet name for his sister. He was sorry to see her look mortified, and wished now that he had given her a kiss, even before the strange young lady.

The word "Pussy-cat" brought back the sunshine to her face again, and she rose radiant and followed him to the dining-room, and admired him to his heart's content while he supped. Harry, pleased at being admired, began to think that his sister was a little dear, and himself a great hulking brute to have vexed her just on his return, and vowed all the young ladies in England should never make him bring tears into her pretty eyes again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ELIGIBLE.

"MONSIEUR LE BARON DE LUZARCHES asks if Madame is visible. He wishes particularly to see madame," said Lisette, popping her head into Mrs. Russell's dressing-room one Thursday morning.

Thursday was Mrs. Russell's reception-day. Mathurine was busy dressing her.

"Monsieur le Baron will just have to wait," she muttered, with her mouth full of pins. The one great act of Mathurine's day was dressing madame, and she went through the process with a deliberate solemnity that nothing could shake—certainly not the fact of a baron being kept waiting. Mrs. Russell had an idea of what Monsieur de Luzarches came about, and hurried Mathurine. Whereupon Mathurine went all the slower, declining, in so many words, to be hurried. And Mrs. Russell entered the drawing-room some five minutes later in consequence.

"*Hein!*" said Mathurine to Lisette, when the door of the drawing-room had closed behind their mistress; "*hein!* what can he want to see madame so early for; do you know, Lisette?"

By way of reply Lisette shrugged her shoulders, and pointed with her right thumb towards the little room where Estelle usually spent her mornings.

"*Tiens!*" cried Mathurine, sticking her hands into her apron-pockets, and involuntarily making a step towards the drawing-room door.

"I don't know for certain, of course," quoth Lisette, feeling in her pocket for her thimble, and drawing forth at the same time a stocking to darn. "But to my mind it looked like it. And it's high time, *pardie!* Mademoiselle must be eighteen, or thereabouts, and madame ought to establish her."

"No doubt madame knows her duties," Mathurine replied, loftily. "Mademoiselle will have a good dowry, and madame has more sense than to throw her only daughter away on the first good-for-nothing that chooses to ask for her. I should like to know who it is, though. Say,

then, Lisette, was there any one with Monsieur le Baron?"

"No one that I know of," replied Lisette, "unless he had got him in his pocket. As soon as I know any thing I'll tell you, never fear." And Mathurine had to go away to her work, wondering and unsatisfied.

"Madame," began the baron, as soon as the lady of the house appeared, "Madame, I have the honor to present my homage;" and as he spoke he made a very low bow, put his hat on his heart, and his feet in what dancing-masters term the "first position."

"I have found a suitor for the hand of Mees Estelle," said the baron, plunging in *medias res* almost before Mrs. Russell had had time to inquire after his wife's health.

"Have you?" said Mrs. Russell, without a shade of surprise. Ever since reading Mr. Vivian's letter to her daughter, she had been thinking that it would be better at once to see about getting a son-in-law according to her own taste. Estelle, although she did not know it, was an heiress. Till she came of age her mother was her guardian. After her one-and-twentieth birthday, she might marry Mr. Vivian, or any other penniless man, if she so pleased: Mrs. Russell had no power to prevent her. Although the girl had said so resolutely that she would never break her mother's heart, Mrs. Russell could not feel sure that her resolution would last when she found that she could make Mr. Vivian a rich man. And even if it did last—for consent to such a marriage she never would as long as she lived—what a horrible prospect it was for her, the mother, to be obliged to feel, as the years went on, that each succeeding year brought her daughter nearer to her liberty; that Estelle might say to Mr. Vivian, in so many words, "I will never marry during my mother's lifetime." Mrs. Russell hated the idea of dying, always; and hated it all the more now that it seemed as if her death would help her daughter to having her own way. Even from the next world she would have liked to rule over Estelle. She had kept her so much in the background that the girl was still quite a child in some respects, in spite of her love for Mr. Vivian. Having lived nearly all her life in France, and among French people, there had been no officious friend, no gossiping English nurse, to puff her up with notions of her own importance. It would have been necessary to tell her some time hence, of course, of the fortune left her by her rich godmother. And as soon as the fact of the heiress-ship became known, there would be no danger of a lack of suitors. But all that had been in the future; and as Estelle seemed so likely, by her unlucky fancy for Mr. Vivian, to cut out her future quite otherwise than suited her mother's ideas, Mrs. Russell felt that on her side it would be prudent, if possible, to drive one fancy out by putting another in. To do this it became necessary that she should look about her, inquire about antecedents, genealogies, and so forth. She felt this a great trouble, and was thankful when Monsieur de Luzarches happened actually to divine her thoughts without making it necessary for her to explain and set him to work.

Monsieur de Luzarches had a great admiration for Mrs. Russell, and professed it, even to his wife's face. He always paid her a visit on Sundays and Thursdays, and sat gossiping for exact-

ly an hour by the clock. The last time they had met at the Préfecture he had said to her, "I suppose you are thinking of establishing your daughter soon?"

Mrs. Russell had been watching Estelle, and thinking that her manner was absent, and her expression any thing but happy. Could the girl be pining for that wretched Vivian? The mother's cheek reddened angrily as the possibility of its being so occurred to her. It was then that Monsieur de Luzarches came up and spoke. She blessed him in her inmost heart, and then, womanlike, gave an indifferent answer:

"That is a thing one must not do in a hurry. It is extremely difficult to meet with a really desirable connection."

"Difficult, yes; impossible, no. Permit me to aid you in your search, madame."

"But, my dear baron, I could not venture to give you the trouble."

"For you and your daughter no exertion could be a trouble," was the gallant reply. And now it really seemed as if the baron had been exerting himself to some purpose.

"Yes, madame, I have found a suitor," he said. "The only difficulty is about the fortune. The young man's parents will not allow him to marry any one with a dowry under two hundred thousand francs. I imagined that Mees Estelle's dowry might perhaps be somewhere about that figure, but of course I could not take upon myself to say. It is that, however; is it not?"

"I rather think it will be somewhere near seven hundred thousand," said Mrs. Russell, quietly.

"Seven hundred thousand!" the baron repeated; and then he took snuff, and thought, "So this quiet unassuming child is an heiress." He had no children; he had never had any, and had congratulated himself on being childless when he saw the trouble men had with their sons. But now he cursed the evil destiny which kept such a prize from falling to the lot of a Luzarches.

"Now, then, who is the aspirant for my daughter's hand?" asked Mrs. Russell, who had keenly enjoyed the little man's surprise.

The baron instantly went back to business. It was an excellent match, he said. An only son, and direct heir to a number of distant childless relatives, who would have all died out before ten years were over. Both parents were living; but the father, Monsieur le Comte de Montaigu, was very infirm, and Monsieur Raymond might come into his title any day. Finally, Monsieur Raymond was over head and ears in love with the charming Miss Estelle.

"Montaigu? That is a good name. What of the family?" asked Mrs. Russell. "I won't have any thing to do with new people."

They were undoubtedly well-born, M. de Luzarches assured her; and well off, besides the expectations. They had a handsome chateau a few miles off, on the other side of the Garonne, and their hotel, a fine old house in the city, which they occupied during the carnival. Madame de Montaigu had been a lovely woman once, was still handsome, dressed perfectly, entertained admirably, and was an intimate friend of Madame de Luzarches, where Madame Rousset would have met her this past winter, only that Monsieur de Montaigu had had a paralytic stroke in the autumn at the chateau, and had not been fit to be moved into town till the end of the carnival;

and Madame de Montaigu was extremely devout, and never went into society in Leit.

"In short," said Mrs. Russell, "you really think it would be a desirable connection?"

"Not a doubt," the baron answered. "The Montaigu family is one of the very few left in this part of the country which has any right to be classed with the old noblesse. There was a title in it long before the time of Louis XIII. That monarch advanced the then Baron de Montaigu to the dignity of Count."

"So far," said Mrs. Russell, "every thing seems satisfactory. I have the greatest confidence in you, baron. But, even if every thing else were settled, there would still be my daughter's consent to gain. I shall never force her to marry. When she does, it will be from inclination alone."

The baron bowed, thinking to himself, "What a Utopian idea! Girls' inclinations, forsooth! What blind idealists these English mothers are!"

Mrs. Russell proceeded:

"The Montaignus must be made to understand that I don't vouch for her taking a liking to this Monsieur Raymond. She has been extremely hard to please; in fact, she has never shown the least liking for any one as yet."

The baron smiled, and showed his white teeth. "I have not a doubt of Mees Estelle's being much too well brought up for such a thing to occur unsanctioned by you, madame."

And then, with a repetition of bows, the old gentleman got himself gradually outside the door, and tripped down stairs and into the street with an air of intense satisfaction.

He walked along till he came to the Hôtel Montaigu, which stood at the extreme end of the noble or White Quarter, as it is generally styled in Toulouse parlance.

"Hist, baron; hist!" cried a voice, as he entered the gateway of the hotel.

Monsieur de Luzarches looked up. Monsieur Raymond de Montaigu was sitting on a window-sill in the *entresol*, attired in a gorgeous dressing-gown and tasselled cap, smoking.

"Where do you come from, most irreproachable of Mentors?" cried Monsieur Raymond, waving his cigar.

"What would you give to know?" replied the baron.

Monsieur Raymond suddenly disappeared from the window, and as suddenly reappeared at a little side door, the private entrance to his bachelor suite of rooms in the *entresol*.

"I am on my way to see your parents," said the baron. "I will come up to your rooms afterwards."

"You have been to see *her* mother?"

Monsieur de Luzarches nodded and smiled.

"Come up and tell me all about it. Let the old people wait," cried Monsieur Raymond, impatiently.

The baron turned to the side door. Raymond was a favorite of his. He gave him good advice now and then in homœopathic doses, for fear of its disagreeing with him.

Raymond shut the door, peeped into his bedroom to see whether his valet was listening, and then came and sat down by Monsieur de Luzarches, who was getting his breath back by slow degrees, for the stairs were steep and he was more than robust.

"Tenez, I think your affair is set a-going," said he.

Monsieur Raymond threw his smoking-cap up in the air and caught it again. "You are the best and most devoted of friends," he exclaimed. "And the dowry? It reaches the prescribed figure?" he continued anxiously.

"*Mon cher*, I have found thee a treasure," returned the baron. "Figure to thyself seven hundred thousand francs!"

Raymond threw himself back in his chair. "Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated with a sigh of relief. "If you only knew, baron, how I have been tormenting myself about the miserable dowry! My mother said, 'Not a *sou* under two hundred thousand.' And I knew she would stand firm. And I was looking forward to being forced to make the three respectful summonses."

"Poor fellow!" said Monsieur de Luzarches, kindly. "But we would have found thee another, as rich and as fair; never fear, Raymond. *Va*, I love thee too well to see thee in despair, my boy."

"When first I saw Mees Estelle, I said, that girl shall be my wife," said Raymond, very quietly, but with flashing eyes. "And it shall be. I have sworn it to myself, do you see, Monsieur le Baron?"

The baron laughed. "That is charming; but suppose she won't have you?"

"In that case, there is the Garonne," said Raymond, proceeding to light a fresh cigar.

The baron whistled. "He looks as if he were capable of it," he thought. "I hope the young mees will be favorable."

"Well, I must see the comtesse," he said, looking at his watch. "I suppose she will be visible?"

"To you, and on such an errand, certainly," was Raymond's reply. "Apropos, if she makes any difficulty about the religion, manage her carefully."

"*Peste!*" said Monsieur de Luzarches. "I forgot all about that; I never even asked Madame Roussel, and she said nothing about it, either. That may be a knotty point. But since when is *madame votre mère* become devout?"

"Oh, she is not exactly devout. Heaven forbid! But in a woman who has already arrived at a certain age, one often perceives symptoms of that sort of thing. For me, Mees Estelle might be a Mohammedan; but for the parents—Ah, my dear friend, parents are tiresome creatures sometimes."

"So are bigoted wives," said the baron, with a grimace.

"It is precisely because of that that I should so much prefer my wife to be a Protestant: since it would seem that a religion of some sort is a necessity to the female mind," said Raymond.

"I wish I had married a Protestant," sighed the baron as he rose.

Madame de Luzarches passed half her time at church and in the confessional.

"Keep the excellence of the dowry well in view," said Raymond as he opened the door.

"Be easy on that point; I was not born yesterday," said the baron, rather touchily; for the allusion to female bigotry had ruffled his good humor. "Madame will have to convert the girl. The dowry is the chief thing, after all."

"For the family, yes; but not for me. I

would as soon marry her to-morrow as not, even were she penniless," said Raymond, seriously.

"The girl has bewitched you, that's clear," said the baron. "*Au revoir.*"

And the old gentleman went his way to Madame de Montaigu's apartments on the first floor, where for the present we will leave him.

CHAPTER V.

MONSIEUR RAYMOND'S BOURUET.

MADAME DE MONTAIGU and Mrs. Russell met by tacit appointment at the house of Madame de Luzarches. Each looked the other over, and decided in her secret mind that there was no objection. The same process was then gone through with regard to Monsieur Raymond and Miss Estelle. Madame de Montaigu inspected the English girl, and approved of her. Mrs. Russell on her side took Monsieur Raymond's measure, and decided that he was just the son-in-law she would have chosen, had all the young men in France passed in review before her. Monsieur Raymond was extremely handsome, his boots and gloves irreproachable, and his waistcoats in perfect taste. He employed a Parisian artist for his coats. He was a thorough adept in all that appertains to the business of the drawing-room, understood the art of listening, and could be lively and witty without becoming oppressive. Mrs. Russell was enraptured with him. Monsieur Raymond was of course a freethinker. Mrs. Russell was not a freethinker herself; she did not consider freethinking becoming in a woman. But what is unbecoming in a woman may be becoming in a man, and amongst men freethinking was decidedly the order of the day. That Monsieur Raymond, then, believed not in a God; that he emphatically believed in goddesses; that he conceived himself to be a very fine fellow, the end of whose being was to lead a mazy, butterfly existence, and generally to make the best of this span of life while it lasted—was a very small matter to Mrs. Russell. He knew how to move his arms and legs, how to dress himself, how to talk, and how to be silent. He would never annoy her by absence of mind and awkwardness; there was but one shaky life between him and his title; and, finally, if Estelle could be made to marry him, it would most effectually prevent her marrying Louis Vivian.

A spice of girlish vanity would have warned Estelle of what was preparing for her; but she was too absorbed in thinking on and wondering at Louis Vivian's love for her—so insignificant she believed herself—to see any thing out of the common in the sudden assiduity of Madame de Montaigu and Monsieur Raymond, and the constant coming and going of Monsieur de Luzarches.

Her eyes were suddenly opened by receiving, early one morning, a splendid bouquet, with Monsieur Raymond's card attached to it.

"Is it not delicious, mademoiselle?" asked Lisette, holding up the bouquet, a conical construction composed of Parma violets of every hue—lilac, white, streaked, and purple—and crowned by a magnificent Mont Blanc camellia.

"Who sent it?" Estelle asked, feeling under

her pillow for her love-letter. By day it was hid in the sandal-wood box.

"*Tenez*, behold the card. 'With the respectful homage of Raymond de Montaigu.' Mademoiselle might have guessed the name. The valet brought it. He told me it cost a napoleon. Mademoiselle will be a countess." And Lisette's eyes sparkled.

"You are talking nonsense. I wish you would not say such things to me," Estelle replied, coldly.

"But mademoiselle knows it as well as I do," said Lisette, who had had a chat with Monsieur Raymond's valet. "Look here," said the valet, as he gave her the bouquet, "my master is courting your young lady. Say, then, M^{lle} Lisette, tell me in confidence what sort of temper has she? I heard Monsieur le Baron de Luzarches tell Madame la Comtesse not to lose time. She is valuable, apparently, this young lady."

The bouquet, before reaching its destination, had been well inspected by all the servants, down to the scullery-maid, who had said, like Lisette, "How deeply the gentleman must be in love to spend such a deal of money on a heap of flowers!"

"Take them away, and open the window," said Estelle; "I can't bear that strong perfume, and I hope Monsieur Raymond won't trouble himself to send any more."

"So mademoiselle lets them lie neglected on the bed," said Lisette, not heeding her mistress's order. "If the poor gentleman could see how badly they are received, sweet, innocent flowers!"

"Is mamma getting up?" Estelle asked.

"Yes, indeed; Mathurine came from her room just now, mademoiselle," said the maid, opening the window.

"You can come back when I ring," said Estelle, jumping up with sudden resolution.

As soon as her maid was gone, she snatched up the bouquet and ran to her mother's room.

"Did you know about this, mamma?" she asked, holding up the bouquet.

"A bouquet! Well?" said Mrs. Russell, quietly.

"Monsieur Raymond de Montaigu sends it. Did you know?" the girl repeated. "Lisette had the—the impertinence to say he was my—my—that he wanted to marry me."

"As for that, he has my permission to pay you his addresses, certainly," said Mrs. Russell. "And what a lovely bouquet! Where could he have got it?"

"I can get flowers myself when I want them. I don't want his, certainly," said her daughter, with as much firmness as she could assume.

Mrs. Russell was imperturbable. "You won't get many such bouquets as that, missy, out of your allowance, let me tell you."

"I have a great mind to send the wretched bouquet back," Estelle cried, gaining courage. "I don't want his attentions. I don't want to marry him, or any one. I intend to be an old maid. I shall send the bouquet back, mamma."

"You will do nothing so absurd," interposed Mrs. Russell. "I approve of Monsieur Raymond. He is suitable in every way. Above all, he will be Comte de Montaigu when his old father dies; and I should like—look at me, my pet"—she touched her daughter's cheek caressingly—"I should like to see my only daughter a countess. Countess Estelle—does not that sound

pretty, daughter mine?" Mrs. Russell was not ordinarily lavish of her embraces. Now she drew her child to her and kissed her fondly. And Estelle, who knew that her mother knew how high a value she set upon her kisses, felt that she was being brought over.

"Countess Estelle! Yes, it sounds nice, certainly. But it will never be my name," she added, hastily, feeling that the bare admission that it sounded well was a wavering in her allegiance to Louis Vivian.

"Never is a long day. Go back to your room and dress," said her mother.

Estelle turned back as she opened the door. "I tell you, mamma dear, I have quite made up my mind. I shall be an old maid."

"We shall see," laughed Mrs. Russell. "Young ladies do change their minds sometimes. Take your bouquet with you. It was not sent for me, you know. Adieu! Countess Estelle."

The name rang in her ears as she ran off. "No, no, no," she repeated; "if mamma won't let me marry Louis, I'll be an old maid. I'll not marry this Monsieur Raymond—no, not if he could make me a duchess."

And, whilst Lisette was braiding her hair, she bethought herself what line of conduct she had best follow, in order to make it clear to Monsieur Raymond that his attentions were disagreeable. It was but little she could do by way of any such demonstration. If she remained silent, her silence would only be construed into the proper maidenly reserve of a well-born and well-brought-up girl. It would be fifty times easier if Monsieur Raymond were an Englishman, she thought. She resolved, however, to express disapprobation of the bouquet, if he gave her a chance; and to be as cross and disagreeable as she knew how, if ever she had the opportunity.

"How nice the violets smell!" observed Lisette, who could not forbear alluding to the bouquet, and who, with a long twist of Estelle's hair in one hand and a comb in the other, felt herself for a moment mistress of the situation.

"I hate such a quantity," Estelle said.

"Monsieur Raymond would be desolated to know that. I shall give his valet a hint. There are plenty of flowers besides violets."

"I beg you will do nothing of the sort, Lisette."

"Oh, mademoiselle may depend on my discretion. La, la, what a length of hair! I should like Monsieur Raymond to see it, *pardie*."

"Lisette!" Estelle exclaimed, flushing angrily.

"*Tenez*, he would go on his knees to admire it. And what would he not give to possess a lock! Look here, a full yard and a quarter long, I vow, mademoiselle!"

Estelle shook her head free of the maid's hands, regardless of pain. "You are too impertinent," she cried. "You forgot yourself, Lisette; and if you talk like this any more, I shall speak to madame."

"Dear!" cried Lisette, lifting up her hands, "is it possible that I have offended mademoiselle? I was only joking."

"Don't let it happen again, please," said Estelle, still angry.

"Certainly not, mademoiselle." And presently Lisette, saying that she heard Mademoiselle Julia's bell, left the room, thinking, "She must be in love with some one else to turn up her nose

at such a good match. How she snapped me up, to be sure!"

As she finished dressing, Estelle resolved to write to Louis Vivian. She knew that if her mother were aware of any such intention she would endeavor to frustrate it. She would tell her very likely that she was forward and unmaidenly; that she was not engaged to him; and that no girl should write to a man till she was engaged to him.

"But he has asked me to be engaged to him, and I should have said 'Yes' before now, if it were not for mamma. That dear, kind letter ought to be answered, too, one way or another. And if I leave it for mamma to answer, she will write him something very naughty and disagreeable, poor dear fellow!" And she sat down to her writing-table, and began:

"MY DEAR LOUIS—"

But the note was not to be written in peace.

"May I come in?" said Julia, knocking.

"I wish I could be left alone," muttered Estelle. "Come in!" she said, in a tone the reverse of cordial.

"That sounded very much like 'Stay out,'" observed Julia, entering. "What's the matter with you this morning?"

"Nothing," said Estelle, putting away her blotting-book.

"So you have had a bouquet this morning," said Julia, taking it up. (Lisette had told her about it already.) "You have made a conquest, you sly puss, and never told me."

"I have not done any thing of the kind."

"Why, here is proof positive! Come, tell me all about it. Is it serious, or only flirting?"

"You know I never flirt, Julia," said Estelle, blushing up to the roots of her hair.

"Stuff! Don't look so disdainful, my dear. There are many ways of flirting. You take your way, and I take mine. Yours consists in playing the part of a sweet innocent. You do it to the life, I will say. And it suits your complexion and style of face."

"You may believe me or not," returned Estelle; "but what I say is true, nevertheless. I have never flirted in all my life. Why," she exclaimed, feeling that she had wherewith to put a stop to the discussion, "if I wanted to flirt, mamma would not let me. She would shut me up in a convent at once."

Julia laughed merrily. "I'm glad that I am not her daughter! Why what's this? 'With the respectful homage of Raymond de Montaignu.' What fun!"

"It is no fun to me. It vexes me beyond measure; and I hate the very sight of the bouquet. There!" and down went Monsieur Raymond's luckless offering on the floor.

Julia's laugh rang out merrily again. "It is quite refreshing to see you in a bad temper: your eyes flash so prettily."

"I am perfectly miserable," said Estelle, ready to cry.

"Nonsense! I think you ought to be pleased. Monsieur Raymond had better transfer his homage to me. I shall not treat his bouquet in such an ungrateful way, depend upon it. Such a sweet meaning as this one has too. Violets to betoken his modesty, and the Mont Blanc on top to signify how humbly he bows down to your high mightiness."

"How do you know?"

"Why, you poor ignorant child, did you never study the language of flowers?" said Julia, picking up the bouquet.

"No, indeed; I never studied any such nonsense. Do take it away. I hate it, and I hate Monsieur Raymond," Estelle cried, vehemently.

"Which means you are in love with some one else. I have got it!" cried Julia, clapping her hands.

"In love! I really do not understand you;" and Estelle walked out of the room with what Julia styled her "empress air," and showed her resentment of her friend's intimation by preserving a dignified silence towards her all breakfast time.

This was such a new phase in Estelle's character, that Julia was at first amused by it; but before the morning was half over she had got tired of having no one to talk to. She could neither chat with Mrs. Russell nor flirt with Harry, for at breakfast Mrs. Russell had signified to her son that she wanted to speak to him on business, and the two had been shut up ever since in the book-room.

Estelle was in the drawing-room, supposed to be getting ready her Spanish exercise. But there was a sheet before her not intended for the teacher's eye, and it ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR LOUIS,—I got your letter, and I thought it very kind and good of you to have remembered me all this time. It will be two years next August since we parted at Caunterets, and I am just the same, although you wickedly prophesied I should change my mind. Mamma was dreadfully angry at your letter, and said a great deal which I thought very *unkind*. But I do not mind what mamma says, neither do I mind your being poor. Bayard was poor; but '*sans peur et sans reproche*.' I think you are like Bayard."

"Dear Louis, you ask me to promise to be your wife. As you say, I am no longer a child, and I ought to know my own mind by this time. I am almost eighteen, and mamma began to take me into society soon after my last birthday. I have seen nobody to compare with you. The young men are all of them either stupid, or frivolous, or conceited; their only use is to dance with, and to hand one to one's carriage."

"Dear Louis, I hope you do believe that I shall always care for you truly. And yet I do not know how to answer your question, for mamma said she would die of grief if I married you. 'She would break her heart,' she said. It was very terrible for me to hear such words; for, although she is strict, she is very, *very* fond of me. I am quite sure of that. I told her that I would never break her heart, and that I would be an *old maid*? and so I will. I would wait all my life for you, if need were, and never tire. But you work so hard, and are so clever, that you must get rich before long, and then mamma will relent. She does not know of my writing this, and you must not answer it, please; because I do not wish to make her angry. I wish you would take another walking tour this summer. I suppose we shall go to the mountains as usual. I still go on studying, although I am come out. I wish you could tell me what you would like best for me to study. To be a fit wife for you I ought

to be wonderfully clever. As mamma will not give her consent now, you must console yourself by thinking that by the time she does relent I shall be *such* a learned lady; learned enough even for you! And so believe me, dear Louis, ever your own little

ESTELLE.

"P.S.—There is a Monsieur Raymond de Montaigu who has taken it into his head to pay attentions to me. Mamma approves of him, but I think him a shocking dandy. His hair looks as if he spent hours over it; he has a tiny little absurd mustache, is always dressed to perfection, and thinks a great deal of himself; and I *hate* him."

Writing this letter had quite restored Estelle's serenity. She looked up as Julia entered the room, and, remembering how offended she had been all breakfast-time, said sweetly: "I was horribly cross this morning; I won't be so another time if you will forgive me. I had no right to be cross with you; it was not your fault."

Julia returned her kiss. It suited her to be friendly. She wanted to make Estelle useful. The friend who had been in the habit of transmitting her Indian letters had written to say that she was going to travel in Germany, and she was much put to it for a go-between.

"I want you to do me a kindness," she began.

Estelle was quite ready to promise. Julia went on: "I'm in a fix. I have letters sometimes which I don't choose to let the good people at home know any thing about. A friend has been in the habit of forwarding them to me, but she writes to say I must not depend on her any longer. Now, I dare not have them sent direct to me, and I want you to forward them to me in England when I go back. It would not be much trouble."

"Why can't they be sent direct?" Estelle asked.

"Because I hate a fuss. And there would be a fuss if papa and mamma knew who my correspondent was. I do as I choose in most things, but if they knew this they'd go into fits, both of them."

"You are carrying on a clandestine correspondence?" said Estelle, opening her eyes.

"Just that. Now, don't look so shocked! If you were in my place, you would do exactly the same."

"But surely it is a sin," said Estelle, half to herself.

"You will put me out of patience with your old-fashioned notions," cried Julia. "Why should you set up for being better than other girls? How many do you suppose to be tied up to their mother's apron-strings as you are? I don't know a girl in England who would put up with the life you lead. You can't do the simplest thing without consulting your mamma. I don't believe you dare call your soul your own. It's a shame of her to keep you in such bondage!"

Estelle could not bear to hear her mother spoken of so slightly.

"You will please to speak of mamma with more respect," she cried. "If I am tied up to her apron-strings, it is because I like it."

"I know better. You only think you like it because you have been brought up so. Any one but you would fight against such absurd tutelage."

But about these letters. They are a great nuisance, but I can't help having them."

"You should have said what you wanted before you asked me to help you," said Estelle. "I can not do this. Mamma would not allow it."

"You need not tell her."

Estelle shook her head.

Julia went on: "It is such a simple thing, too. And there's no harm. It's a cousin I am engaged to. We have a perfect right to correspond."

"Engaged! Of course you can write if you choose, then. But, if you are engaged, why conceal it?"

"Because papa and mamma wouldn't approve of it if they knew. They have a stupid prejudice against cousins marrying."

"Then why—"

"How tiresome you are! Will you do it for me—yes or no?"

"No!" said Estelle, stoutly. "I dare not. And it would not be right, even if I did dare."

"You are a little coward," said Julia, rising. "You might help one out of a fix, just for once."

"Behold monsieur le professeur, who comes to give mademoiselle the lesson," said Mathurine, throwing open the door.

Estelle started up. "And my exercise not finished! What will mamma say?"

"Madame desires mademoiselle to proceed with her lesson. She is engaged, and can not come in," continued Mathurine, taking her seat in a corner near the door, and pulling some work from her pocket. Mathurine always acted as duenna when Mrs. Russell could not be present during her daughter's lessons.

Estelle was glad to have her that morning, for although the old professor was lenient, she knew she would have been scolded by her mother for the ill-prepared lesson.

She thought over what Julia had said during the day. There seemed a difference in the way in which she stood with regard to Louis Vivian, and the way in which Julia stood with regard to her lover. But she could not tell where the difference lay. It seemed right that she should tell Louis Vivian that she could not marry him because of her mother's disapproval; common courtesy, indeed, demanded that he should be answered. But her mother would be angry at her writing, no matter what she wrote.

"And would she be angry if it were proper for me to write to him?" she asked herself.

She remained perplexed for a long time.

At last she thought, "Should I be in any doubt if it were right for me to do this? Surely not. Then I dare not. It must be a sin."

But yet she had not courage to tear up the sheet she had written to him. She folded it up and put it away in the sandal-wood box.

And Louis Vivian's question remained unanswered.

CHAPTER VI.

MATHURINE'S MIDNIGHT WATCH.

BEFORE very long, Monsieur Raymond became conscious that his wooing was not progressing favorably. He redoubled his attentions to Mrs. Russell, won Alfred's heart by frequent presents

of bonbons, took an English master, in order to qualify himself for speaking English with Harry—thereby much discomfiting the young lieutenant, who, pulling his whiskers furiously, would wonder "what the fellow meant by calling him 'my dear,'"—and offered up a bouquet at his lady's shrine every morning. The excessive reserve with which Estelle continued to receive his attentions was very charming from one point of view; that is to say, it seemed a guaranty that she would be a safe wife—one who would not require watching in society; but still, being approved of by the mother, he would have liked a glance or a smile from the daughter now and then. He would have descended to the depths of despair had it not been for Mrs. Russell's strong assurances that Estelle was favorable to his suit.

"You are too easily discouraged, Monsieur Raymond," she would say. "My daughter is very young and shy; but surely I, who am her mother, ought to know her feelings, if she has any."

And Monsieur Raymond would kiss Mrs. Russell's white hands, and go away comforted.

"What has become of those flowers?" Mrs. Russell asked one morning. "I ordered Lisette to put them in the inner drawing-room."

Estelle did not answer, and pretended to be very busy drawing.

"Estelle, did you hear me speak? I asked what had been done with the bouquet Monsieur Raymond sent this morning. I wish him to see it here when he comes."

"Monsieur Raymond's bouquet!" said Estelle, raising her head from her drawing, and looking very steadily at her mother. "I gave it to the portress's dog to play with, and I dare say he has torn it up by this time. Shall I go and see? I hear him barking in the court."

"I am astonished at you!" cried Mrs. Russell, alarmed at the mutinous expression of her daughter's face. "If Monsieur Raymond knew that he would never come near us again."

"I have a great mind to tell him the very next time he comes, and then perhaps he will let me alone," cried Estelle.

"I am excessively displeased with you," said Mrs. Russell, walking out of the room. In Estelle's present mood talking seemed useless. She therefore showed her displeasure by not speaking to her for three days—a proceeding which, as she had well guessed, gave Estelle far more pain than the sharpest scolding she could have inflicted.

But on the evening of the third day, as Estelle sat alone in the dark—for it was too miserable to stay in the drawing-room with her mother, who had kind words for every one except herself—Lisette came to her, saying: "I have been seeking mademoiselle everywhere. Behold Monsieur Raymond who arrives, and mademoiselle is to put on her blue silk dress, and come to the drawing-room immediately, madame says."

"I won't go in," thought Estelle. "Tell madame," she said to Lisette, trembling as she said it, "that I do not wish to enter the drawing-room to-night."

"But I dare not carry such a message," said Lisette. "Madame would be furious, and I should be discharged immediately. Besides, mademoiselle is not in earnest; mademoiselle will change her mind, and let me dress her."

"Not I. Good-night, Lisette. You need not come back. I shall go to bed."

Lisette shrugged her shoulders, vowed that mademoiselle's caprices were enough to drive a maid to despair, and told Mrs. Russell that mademoiselle was coming presently.

"How terrible it is to disobey one's mother!" Estelle thought, her heart beating in anticipation of Mrs. Russell's anger. "I could not do it for any one but Louis."

A quarter of an hour passed. Then the rustle of a silk dress was heard along the corridor.

"Where are you, Estelle?" said her mother, entering. Estelle rose from the window-seat.

"What are you doing in the dark? Monsieur Raymond is here. I sent Lisette to tell you to put on your blue silk. That gray makes you look like a nun; and I told you before you were not to wear it in the evening. Ring for Lisette, and make haste. Monsieur Raymond has been inquiring for you."

"I do not wish to come into the drawing-room," said Estelle, trembling all over. "I told Lisette to say so. I wish to keep out of Monsieur Raymond's way."

Mrs. Russell laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh.

"You are mistaken if you think I am going to let you behave in this way," she said, ringing the bell violently for Lisette. She stood by till Estelle was dressed; and then, taking her by the wrist, led her forcibly to the drawing-room saying:

"I won't have you sitting back in a corner. You are to talk; you can talk if you choose. Do you hear?"

Estelle was fairly cowed into submission for the time; but when Monsieur Raymond—entranced with her and with himself—had kissed her hand and taken leave, she turned to her mother and said, with a white face and quivering lips:

"I never will marry him—never—never—I hate him! And I wish Louis would come and take me away. I would go with him if he asked me. I would, I would."

"I am ashamed of you," returned Mrs. Russell; "but I hope for your own sake you do not quite know what you are saying. It seems as if you wished to bring me to my grave with sorrow and disappointment."

"You know I don't, you know I don't!" the girl cried, bursting into tears. "How could you think so, mamma?"

"What am I to think? You know very well what would please me, and yet you will be obstinate, and disobedient, and wicked. You can go to your own room. I do not wish to see you any more this evening."

Estelle cried herself to sleep that night. Mrs. Russell treated her as if she were in disgrace the next day, and many days after. Mrs. Russell began to hate Louis Vivian. She felt he was her daughter's sole prop in this strange rebellion against her will.

At last even Harry, the most careless and unobservant of mortals, noticed the change in his sister's appearance. The girl was beginning to look like a ghost.

"What's the matter, puss?" he asked. "Why do you sit and mope by yourself? Why do you quarrel with your bread and butter?"

"Mamma won't speak to me," Estelle faltered, her eyes filling with tears. "And she won't kiss me—and I am miserable."

"What have you been up to, to get into a mess?"

"Nothing. Only she wants me to marry—and I—"

"Go on," said Harry, lighting a cigar.

"And I hate him! Oh, Harry, Harry, will you try to persuade mamma to let me alone? Will you take my part now? Tell her I hate Monsieur Raymond."

"How pleased Monsieur Raymond would be to hear that. You had better tell him so," said Harry, laughing.

"I wish I had a chance. But mamma is always there. I wish mamma would marry him herself, as she is so fond of him."

"Nonsense. He is very gentlemanly and very handsome. And you are quite a Frenchwoman yourself. I should say he was just the fellow to suit you."

"I can't bear handsome men," Estelle said. "And he is such a dandy. And I don't believe he is clever."

"Cleverness be hanged!" said Harry, who was not at all clever himself. "Would you have a fellow spout Latin and Greek in a drawing-room?"

"Of course not. And a man may know Latin and Greek and yet be very stupid. Harry"—and she came and cuddled herself up close to him—"Harry, I want you to be a dear, kind boy, and write to Louis—"

"What!" exclaimed Harry.

"Write to Louis Vivian for me, and tell him—"

"My dear child, what a pack of nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense," Estelle exclaimed, sobbing. "He has asked me to marry him, and so I would, only—"

"What business had he to ask you, I wonder?" said her brother, angrily. "He isn't a bad fellow in his way, but he has barely enough to keep himself, and the idea of his wanting to marry you is too absurd. Just like his impudence, it was."

"I will not have you say that!" she cried, moving herself away from her brother. "He is as true a gentleman as ever breathed."

"A truly shabby one," returned Harry. "You should see his coats! I saw him the other day walking down Pall Mall. I don't know which was most seedy, his coat or his umbrella. And he looked as if he'd just come from the moon. The impertinence of his wanting to marry you, indeed!"

"You are very unkind, Harry: I like him, and he has asked me—twice—and I would be engaged to him, if mamma would only let me—"

"And I hope mamma won't let you. I dare say Vivian thinks you'll have some tin, and intends to make a jolly good spec of you." Harry was aware that his mother did not wish Estelle to know any thing about her money. He was in no hurry to disobey her wishes in that respect. It was not that he grudged his sister her good-fortune, but he thought girls were apt to be stuck-up when they knew themselves to be heiresses. He supposed that his mother would have a most natural objection to see Estelle stuck-up.

"He thinks you may have tin some day, you

know," said he. And truly, he imagined Louis Vivian to have no higher motive.

Estelle's face flushed angrily. "I will not have you speak so!" she cried. "I know he cares for me for myself alone. I will not have you hint such a thing."

"Very well, my dear, I won't," said Harry. "But you may as well make up your mind to marry this Monsieur Raymond, for you know as well as I do that when the little mother says a thing she means it."

"And when I say a thing I mean it. I will marry nobody but Louis."

Harry whistled. "Then look out for squalls. I'll bet you any thing you like you don't, though."

"But I will," Estelle insisted; "or else I'll be an old maid."

"No, you won't, Pussy-cat," said Harry, pinching her ear; "I know better. I shall have the pleasure of sending your wedding-cards to Vivian—"

"You cruel, cruel boy! You refuse to help me, and you laugh at me besides."

"I think you want to be laughed out of your nonsensical fancy. You have not seen the fellow for two years, and here you are crying your eyes out for him. Why, you were a mere child two years ago. You are a mere child now, for the matter of that. It's no use, my dear; it's no earthly use, I tell you," said Harry, kissing her. "My advice is: forget the fellow as fast as you can, and don't run counter to the little mother, because you won't find it pay." And that was all the comfort she got from Harry.

Julia was delighted at seeing Estelle "assert her rights," as she termed it, and offered her assistance in carrying on the mutiny against maternal authority.

But Estelle, despite her resistance to Mrs. Russell's wishes, loved her too well to bear Julia's disrespectful remarks on her, so that Julia was forced to restrict herself to vague expressions of sympathy.

Estelle's conduct was a complete enigma to Julia. She had drawn from her, one day when she was more discouraged and miserable than usual, the confession that she liked some one—an Englishman—of whom her mother disapproved. She might perhaps have learnt more, but her eager curiosity, and her offer of writing to the gentleman instantly, to inform him of the cruel manner in which Mrs. Russell was treating her, made Estelle shrink from further confidences.

"You are an odd girl," Julia said at last. "If you won't let me write, why don't you write yourself? That's what I should do. I'd tell him all about it."

Estelle was silent. It was useless to try to make Julia understand why she did not write herself.

"Well, I'm sure he ought to be flattered at your making a martyr of yourself," said Julia. "Don't give in. Perhaps when your mamma sees you really intend having your own way for once, she'll change her mind."

"Mamma never changes her mind," said Estelle, mournfully.

Meanwhile a vial of wrath was being prepared for Julia in an unexpected quarter. Mrs. Russell was a clever little woman, but she was too much occupied just then with her refractory daughter to

give due heed to her son's ways; and when Harry undertook the task of conveying instruction to Julia in astronomy, a branch of useful knowledge in which she professed herself lamentably deficient, Mrs. Russell never even suspected a budding flirtation. So the pair sat, evening after evening, with their heads over an astronomical map, an unwieldy thing which required a small table all to itself; and looked out the names of the stars in the Great Bear's tail, or referred to that particular portion of the heavens which was only visible from the farthest end of the balcony; and Mrs. Russell sat by and saw nothing.

But, as every one knows, stars have different hours for rising, and it sometimes happened that the particular constellation Julia wished to observe did not become visible in the heavens until after the household had retired to bed. It was perfectly natural that she should step out on the gallery to view it, and quite as natural that Harry, whose window was nearly opposite hers, should join her there, and explain the relative position of such constellations to the North Pole, or any place else. The astronomical lecture over, Harry would recite long passages out of the "Glaoui" and the "Bride of Abydos," light himself a cigar, and supply his fair pupil with a delicate cigarrito.

Now these two might have paced the gallery night after night, lovingly enveloped in the folds of one cloak, had Harry only possessed strength of mind sufficient to deprive himself of his cigar! But in the first place, he argued, every body was asleep; in the second, he didn't care if they weren't; and, lastly, he could not exist without his smoke. Hence the mischief.

One night Mathurine, who had been to confession in the evening, and had a long series of prayers to say as a penance, fell asleep over them, and woke an hour later to find her light burnt out. That was no great matter, as *paters* and *aves* can be said just as well in the dark. So Mathurine finished the prescribed quantity, and then opened her window to have a peep at the stars before going to bed. But, besides the stars, she observed something else shining: two red sparks, down on the first-floor gallery. She watched for a moment, but they remained stationary. Supposing it to be a thieves' sentinel, she leaned out of window and shrieked "Thieves!" with all her might.

The sparks instantly disappeared—plain proof, she thought, of the truth of her conjecture. Descending stealthily to the first floor, she walked the whole length of the gallery on both sides, without meeting any one. She listened attentively, and passed down into the court, but there was no sound except the waving to and fro of the shrubs in the night breeze. She tried the doors, but they were fast. She knocked at Harry's door. Harry opened it, and asked what she wanted so late at night. "Pardon, monsieur," said Mathurine; "it is that I fear there are thieves lurking in the house. There were certainly two individuals on this gallery just now."

Harry mentally consigned Mathurine to a place once supposed to be near the centre of the earth. "Stuff!" he exclaimed, in very bad French; "you old women take fright at any thing. I was having a smoke on the gallery, that's all. I thought of the new curtains madame had put up the other day."

"It is true," said Mathurine; "that never oc-

curred to me. But who was monsieur's companion?"

"Companion! Go to bed, Mathurine; you are in your dotage," said Harry, closing his door.

"*Pardie*, monsieur," said Mathurine, moving a step farther in, "I saw two lights."

"I was trying to smoke two cigars."

"That's not possible, monsieur. One light was here, and another there," persisted Mathurine, pointing.

"You must have been asleep; you dreamt it. There, don't bother, and don't go telling madame any nonsense. Take that, and hold your tongue," said Harry, closing the door upon her.

"*P'tit Jésus!*" Mathurine muttered, on trying the coin between her teeth and finding it a napoleon; "there's something going on, or he would never have given me this. I shall watch this young monsieur."

Mathurine did watch, sitting in the dark and telling her beads. And one evening, when the two red sparks had disappeared, she went down softly, and peeped in at all the windows.

"Monsieur," she said to Harry next morning, "there were persons walking up and down this gallery last night. I will swear to it."

"There you are again," said he. "What a tiresome old woman you are! I always walk here by night. It's my quarter-deck, do you understand?"

"Monsieur understands, however, that I shall speak to madame if it occurs again. It is not monsieur's sister who walks and smokes with him. Blessed child, she is in her bed, reposing like the holy angels. No, no, monsieur needs not to inform me of any thing," said Mathurine, shaking her head virtuously and viciously.

"Will you hold your stupid tongue?" cried Harry, in a great rage. "This is madame's house, not yours. I won't be dictated to by an old woman."

Mathurine drew herself up. "Monsieur understands that I have the interest of the family at heart."

"Yes, yes, I dare say; but you don't understand English customs. Take that to get yourself a new cap."

"Not so bad," thought Mathurine, as she pocketed a second napoleon. She would watch a little longer, and then tell madame.

Mrs. Russell spent that evening at Madame Fleury's. Estelle was gone to bed with a headache. She always had headaches now, and Julia, really pitying her, had offered to sit with her and bathe her forehead with eau-de-cologne. Harry went to the theatre.

But Estelle fell asleep, and Harry, finding the play dull, returned home early, and had a pleasant tête-à-tête with Julia to finish the evening.

"We must give up our meetings by starlight," he said. "Mathurine has been watching us, and vows she'll tell my mother. It won't do to get into a row, you know."

Julia sighed. "It was so pleasant having you to talk to. We think so much alike. Your mother and Estelle are too completely French for me. I feel quite homesick sometimes, although Estelle is a little darling, and Mrs. Russell all that is kind."

"Are you homesick, really, now?" said Harry, drawing his chair a little nearer to Julia's.

Julia only answered by a deep sigh.

"I remember," said Harry, "when I was a mid—my first voyage, you know—I was awfully sea—homesick, I mean; but I soon got over it. I dare say you will in time."

Julia shook her head in a gently desponding manner. "I wish, oh, I wish I could. But at home I have always been accustomed to such complete liberty, and here—oh, dear, I feel sometimes as if I were in a convent. I did venture out once alone, and I'm sure I thought I should never hear the last of it from Mrs. Russell. You should have heard her on French etiquette."

"Oh," said Harry, "I can just imagine that. But you and I are English, and we won't be trammelled by French nonsense. It's very well for my sister, who has been brought up in the French way. I'll tell you what now. We two will have a jolly little stroll down by the Botanic Gardens some evening when my mother is busy with her charity committee. And—what do you say to having ices somewhere?"

That was just what Julia wished for.

"It's no use; she'll find out and make a fuss," she said, with another sigh, intended to stimulate Harry.

It had the desired effect. Harry vowed he would manage it somehow. Only let her trust to him, he said tenderly.

"But Mrs. Russell might blame you, and that would make me so unhappy," said Julia with one of her most killing glances. "I know how very strict her notions are."

"Oh, bother her notions!" said Harry. "As I said, it's all very well for Estelle. But you just tell me whenever you want a run, and see if I'm not at your service. I'd go to the world's end to serve you—I would indeed, Julia."

"Thanks," Julia murmured, giving him her jewelled hand, and turning her head away with another long-drawn sigh. Harry squeezed her fingers till she winced. He forgot her rings in his ardor.

"You are so kind," she murmured; "like a brother almost. I never had a brother."

"Let me be one," said Harry, "if I mayn't be any thing better."

So the seal of fraternity was set on Julia's white forehead. She received it with the most charming *naïveté*. "I hope dear little Estelle won't be jealous," she said, with her sweetest smile.

She did not blush in the least. Why should she?

That project of a walk round the Botanic Gardens was destined never to be realized. Mathurine was too sharp for them. They had made sure all was safe, and were going out one evening between the lights, when they were pounced upon by the lynx-eyed lady's maid, and forced to turn back ignominiously.

"Fie upon you!" she exclaimed, putting her back against the low door leading from the quadrangle into a back street, where she had waylaid them. "Fie upon you! What! you, a young lady belonging to a good family, go to walk at dusk with a young man! No! not while I have the honor to be in madame's service shall such scandal as this take place. It would ruin Mademoiselle Estelle's prospects for life, and I swear it shall not be!"

It was useless for Harry to argue. Mathurine was as firm as the Pic du Midi, and turned a deaf ear to his vehement assertions of freedom. She

did not even answer him when he proved in execrable but forcible French that both he and Miss Maurice were British subjects. She followed Julia to her room, and made her understand that if there was a repetition of the impropriety it would become her unavoidable duty to inform madame. Indeed, she added, she ought, if she knew her duty, to speak to her at once.

"Do so by all means!" was Julia's answer.

But Harry interposed, and once more paid her for silence.

It cost him a third napoleon.

CHAPTER VII.

MADAME FLEURY'S VIEWS ON MATRIMONY.

THE fact of Mees Estelle—as Estelle Russell was called, the surname of young unmarried ladies being as often dropped as not in Languedoc—the fact of Mees Estelle being an heiress could not long remain a secret.

Madame de Lazarches, as gossiping as she was rigid, took care to spread the news wherever she went, and more than one scheming matron eyed with a critical look the pale, quiet girl in white muslin, who might be a fitting prize for an extravagant son in case the negotiation with the Montaignu-Breuilh family fell to the ground.

From drawing-room to boudoir the news travelled till it reached Madame Fleury. Mees was a veritable millionaire—the tale lost nothing by dissemination—she was going to marry into a family violently Ultramontane, and the day was named for her reception into the treacherous bosom of the Church of Rome.

The community of the Reformed heard all this with mingled horror and dismay. No renegade Moslem can be viewed by those of his own people who still follow the teachings of the Prophet with more loathing or contempt than is felt by the Protestants towards those who, having been born in the Reformed Church, allow themselves to be perverted by Rome's insidious wiles from that faith for which their ancestors fought and died.

In France, in the south more especially, where the fierce climate, far from inducing languor and inactivity, seems but to add to the fierceness of the race, there is little communication between Catholics and Huguenots. Each party, standing aloof, regards the other with mingled disdain and suspicion. On the side of the Huguenots this suspicion is fed by the many cruel remembrances which rattle in their bosoms. They have not forgotten—how should they?—the atrocities committed on their sturdy forefathers; the torturing, the impaling, the wholesale butchery of Huguenots, young and old, authorized and approved of by the Church of Rome. Especially do the Languedoc Protestants remember that the only spot in the broad kingdom of France where the accursed tribunal of the Holy Office was permitted to take root was Toulouse. In the Rue des Cordeliers, a little beyond the ancient nunnery of the Dames de Sainte-Claire, still stands the convent of the Inquisition; now occupied, it is true, by a religious brotherhood devoted to the education of poor children, but still retaining its ancient ill-omened name. And within a hundred yards of it stands the Place St. Georges, scene of many a sickening *auto-da-fé*, as the annals of Languedoc testify.

It was with all this in her mind that Madame Fleury sought her pastor, as soon as she had got rid of the visitor who brought the report of Estelle's forthcoming perversion. It was an untimely hour when she reached Monsieur Cazères's dwelling—his dinner-hour, in fact. But no one was ever turned away from the pastor's door, day or night; and Madame Fleury had not long to wait in the study before Madame Cazères entered, and presently the pastor himself. Madame Cazères would then have retired, but Madame Fleury begged her to remain. It was a curious sight, these two women sitting side by side: the banker's wife in the place of honor, the arm-chair to the right of the fire-place, half-buried in the voluminous draperies, the velvets and furs, which made her rotund person appear still rounder; and the pastor's wife, a poor thin creature, in a rusty cotton gown and plain muslin cap, her once pretty features drawn with lines of care, her patient hands crossed wearily on her lap as if unused to rest. A very Martha she, cumbered with much serving, as Monsieur Cazères said reproachfully to her sometimes. Though, for that matter, it was well indeed for his outward respectability that he had a Martha for his wife instead of a Mary, as he possessed nothing in the world beyond the pittance derived from his position as head pastor of the Temple.

Madame Fleury had soon blurted out her errand. The pastor, sitting at his study-table, turned uneasily on his seat as she went on. He knew that she would wind up by begging him to remonstrate with Mrs. Russell, and he knew also that Mrs. Russell was as likely as not to resent any interference in her family concerns.

"You see," he said, when Madame Fleury had done speaking, "these people being Anglicans makes them so much more difficult to deal with. Were they members of our own communion, the weight of consistorial opinion might be brought to bear with advantage. But as for these Englishwomen! If the whole congregation rose up as one man to protest against the scandal, they would treat the protest with contempt."

Madame Fleury could not but think, however, that a quiet, grave remonstrance from the pastor himself would have a proper effect.

The pastor shrugged his shoulders. "These English," said he, "are so frightfully independent! Do you know I once ventured to warn Madame Roussel of the danger she incurred in contracting friendships so exclusively among the Catholics: above all, I entreated her to be on her guard against the archbishop. And what did she say? That I need be under no apprehension, for that all her Catholic friends knew her to be a hardened heretic."

"What a speech!" exclaimed Madame Fleury, aghast at Mrs. Russell's impertinence.

"The only effectual way of preventing this," said Monsieur Cazères, after a pause, "is to bring some other candidate forward. Could you not help in this, madame, with your immense circle of acquaintance?"

"There is no lack of young men, certainly," said Madame Fleury, "but at this instant I can not think of a single eligible. An heiress, you know, would naturally be more difficult to please than a girl with a modest dowry. And there must be, besides birth and fortune, a large amount of good looks, or no suitor would have the slight-

est chance against a Montaigu. There is a kind of diabolical beauty about that young man; he inherits it from his mother."

"Tenez, there is Monsieur Théodore Beaucens."

Madame Fleury's fat face turned red all over. "Ah, but he is as good as married already. That is, my husband and I have arranged a marriage between him and my niece Mathilde as soon as she has reached the age of seventeen. He is a serious man, and we can trust her to him fully and freely." And madame went on, still feeling uncomfortably hot: "I don't know that he would have suited, even if there had not been this engagement. He is not rich enough for a millionaire like Mees Estelle."

Madame's confusion arose from the fact that her husband had forbidden her to speak as yet of Mathilde's betrothal, even to her chief friend the pastor. "A thousand things may happen," said prudent Monsieur Fleury, "between this and Mathilde's next birthday." And now, without any premeditated breach of faith, the thing had slipped from her tongue, and Monsieur Fleury might be as displeased at her telling as the pastor would be at her not having told before.

Monsieur Cazères was surprised and displeased as well. He thought he had a right to Madame Fleury's full confidence. He gave no sign, at present, however, but made a note of the reticence for some future occasion, and proceeded with the business in hand.

"I hope Mademoiselle Mathilde will be happy," said Madame Cazères, perceiving that her husband proffered not a word of congratulation.

Madame Fleury thanked her timidly. "You would have been the very first people to whom I should have announced the engagement," she said.

The pastor waved his hand. "The worldly concerns of the members of my congregation are less than nothing to me, except in so far as their eternal interests are thereby affected."

"I remember," said Madame Fleury, attempting to regain her self-possession, "that the Vicomtesse de Méissac, an old friend of mine, wrote to me last winter, begging me to help her to look out for a wife for her son. I could not meet with any body at all suiting her views just then, and told her so. However, the son can not be married yet, else I should have received a letter giving notice of the event. Could I mention Mees Estelle to the Vicomtesse? It seems to me that it would be difficult to conduct the negotiation, though: Montpellier, where my friend lives, is such a long way off. You see, there must be a personal interview; and as it would take place at my house, I should stand committed, as it were. Supposing the match were made, well and good. But if nothing came of it, I should be talked of as being an unsuccessful matchmaker."

"You must shake off this faintheartedness, madame," said the pastor, authoritatively. "Those who work for the truth must be bold for the truth. A fainthearted friend is worse than an open enemy. It seems to me that your duty is very plain, although I am not sanguine as to your success. Propose this young vicomte to Madame Roussel as an eligible son-in-law. By so doing you will probably find out whether the report of her daughter's engagement to Monsieur Raymond de Montaigu be true. When we know this, our

way will be clearer. Till then we must be content to work in the dark."

Madame Fleury rose. "If only we can save those millions from passing into the hands of such a bigoted family!"

"And the girl's soul, madame, the girl's soul!" said Pastor Cazères, in his deepest bass.

"Poor little thing! she looks so sweet, and always has a kind word ready for every one," said Madame Cazères, softly.

All that day did Madame Fleury quake inwardly at her undertaking. She confessed that her pastor's rebuke had been well deserved; that she was one of the fainthearted, unwilling to do battle for the truth, loving a quiet life better than the strengthening of the Reformed interest. She knew that she would never have gone to Monsieur Cazères had she supposed he would make her put herself forward. If Mrs. Russell had been a Frenchwoman, she would have been comparatively easy to deal with. But she was an Englishwoman, who could be very charming when she pleased, but who also had been known to assume an air of extreme *hauteur* when she was offended. It was quite a problem whether she might not receive Madame Fleury's offer of a Protestant son-in-law with a Britannic frigidity which would penetrate through the velvets and furs of the banker's wife, even to the marrow of her bones. But her word was passed to Monsieur Cazères, and she dared not draw back. When, therefore, she found herself actually face to face with Mrs. Russell, she plunged desperately into the business at once, and painted Monsieur Anatole de Méissac in glowing colors, regardless of the fact that she had last seen him when he was a fat, awkward boy of eleven.

Mrs. Russell was too much amused at her volubility to show any haughtiness. "Protestant, of course?" she said, when madame stopped to take breath.

"To the backbone, dear madame! Indeed, you would be quite safe in giving him your daughter. There has never been a Catholic in the family. I assure you we could even give him our niece Mathilde with confidence. But we have already a husband for Mathilde, a truly pious young man. Else—"

"I understand. I am very happy to hear that Mademoiselle Mathilde's establishment is fixed. It is too kind of you to think of me: but I am in no hurry for Estelle to settle."

Madame Fleury opened her eyes in pure astonishment. In no hurry, with a daughter just eighteen! "Indeed," she said, "but I had heard—"

"Ah, madame, people will be talking. What can one do? One must let them talk; one can't help one's self. And, after all, it does not matter."

"I can't make it out at all," thought madame.

"Have I been fussing about nothing, perhaps?" Then, aloud: "Without doubt, every virtuous mother wishes to see her daughter well established. That understands itself. I felt delivered from a heavy responsibility when my niece Mathilde's affair was settled. I have all a mother's feelings and instincts, although it has not pleased Heaven to make me a mother. *Apropos*—my husband does not wish Mathilde's betrothal spoken of yet, and we have mentioned it to no one. You will not betray this little confidence, dear madame?"

"My dear madame," Mrs. Russell rejoined, "it is as if you had never told me." And, in truth, Mrs. Russell had other things to think of; besides which, she cared very little for her neighbors' affairs.

"My daughter Estelle is an odd child," she went on; "most difficult to please. She does not appear to care about changing her condition."

"How very curious!" madame had almost said, "how very English!"

"And she might refuse this Monsieur Anatole as she has done many others. You understand that I never could force her inclinations."

"Not force, but guide. Ah, dear madame, a young girl wants guidance in such a serious step. There is nothing more dangerous than a marriage of inclination."

"They do turn out badly sometimes," Mrs. Russell assented.

"What can a young girl know?" cried madame. "Shall I tell you how I married? One day, at dinner, my father presented me two young men, both good-looking, and of nearly equal fortune. My father said, after they had taken leave: 'I give you your choice. Take either. But it is time you were established.' It was a toss-up. I said, 'I don't know which is nicest. They are both nice.' He replied: 'My daughter, of the two, I prefer the one with fine light hair. The dark one, you perceive, has hair of a bristly nature. As far as I know, that is his only defect; still, I have observed that men with this peculiar wiry hair are generally hasty, passionate men.' 'Then let it be the fair-haired one,' I cried."

"And that was Monsieur Fleury?"

"Yes; and he has been a perfect husband to me. Never once has he been out of temper—and that is saying a great deal—for nearly twenty years. And only to think, madame! but for my father's advice I might have chosen the dark man instead of the fair. But to return. You will remember my young friend, Monsieur Anatole, will you not? And as he will be coming to see me one of these days, I may present him, may I not, on the first occasion?"

"Certainly, dear madame. But unless Estelle takes a fancy to him—"

"You are too tender a mother. And yet, one would think you would be glad to have her established. Suppose any thing happened to you—"

"What can I do?" said Mrs. Russell, with a shrug.

Madame took an affectionate leave, and went to report progress to Pastor Cazères. It seemed possible that both the marriage and the perversion of a *canard*, after all. Madame Fleury wrote to her friend Madame de Méissac, inviting her and M. Anatole to stay for an indefinite period.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME DE MONTAIGU SPEAKS HER MIND.

MADAME FLEURY considered herself perfectly justified in spreading a counter-report to the effect that there was no truth in the *on dit* about the marriage of the English mees to Monsieur Raymond de Montaigu. And Madame de Luzarches, hearing it, carried it in hot haste to Madame de Montaigu.

"Is he going to marry that girl, yes or no?"

she asked. "It will be shameful if he lets such a fortune slip out of his hands for want of common energy. Why don't you give him a hint, dear comtesse?"

"We are all waiting to see whether the little one deigns to like him," sneered Madame de Montaigu. "As if any girl in her senses ought not to be flattered at the bare notice of a Montaigu!"

"English mees are very odd," said Madame de Luzarches. "Their first education must be defective, I think."

"No doubt. But, however it may turn out, there is no lack of girls with good dowries," said Madame de Montaigu, who was in reality on thorns lest the prize should slip from her son's hands, but was too proud to confess her apprehension even to her bosom friend.

"I don't think you will find many girls with the fine fortune this one has," persisted Madame de Luzarches. "A million—and such diamonds and pearls—"

"Her dowry is not a million," said Madame de Montaigu, peevishly. "I made inquiries long since of old Peyre, their man of business—I always like to make sure of things—and he told me the exact figure was seven hundred and fifty-one thousand francs. He said nothing about the jewels."

"But I have seen them," said Madame de Luzarches; "and I assure you, my dear friend, that I, who know something about such matters, never have seen anywhere three such magnificent sets as are waiting in their caskets to see the light on this little chir's wedding-day. Mrs. Russell told me she could not wear them herself—that they were her daughter's sole property, left to her, with the fortune, by an eccentric god-mother. Such diamonds and pearls! Such lovely emeralds! What luck some people have, to be sure!" she concluded, with an envious sigh.

After this conversation, it was with some anxiety that Madame de Montaigu awaited her son's daily visit. Interrupting his inquiries after her health, she said brusquely:

"Never mind my health now; I want to know how you are getting on with that child."

Raymond did not feel sanguine; indeed, he had once or twice admitted to himself, in spite of Mrs. Russell's assurances, that he was not progressing at all in Estelle's good graces; but he would not for worlds have made the admission to any one else; least of all to his mother.

"Listen," said madame, perceiving his hesitation. "I am of opinion that there has been quite enough negotiation in this affair of yours. You say that you are content; so am I; and Madame Roussel is, or pretends to be so. What more is wanted? I am getting weary of this inexplicable delay. And if the affair is not decided soon, I shall look out for another wife for you. This little Huguenote gives herself mighty airs. Is she a duchess, then, that so much deference is paid her? Is it not sufficient that her mother's consent is given? These English are well enough in their way, but they ignore the respect due to the head of the family. Do you imagine that I was asked whether I wished to marry your father? No, indeed: what well-born girl expresses an opinion of her own in such matters? There is a want of propriety in the bare idea which disgusts me. You may find, perhaps

—always supposing this little chit does not offer you the affront of a refusal—that it is a great misfortune to have a wife who begins by exercising her own will.”

“My good mother,” said Raymond in his most winning voice, “I am sure you will find her all you can wish. She is very reserved, and as timid as a hare. You should see how she starts and blushes when I speak to her, and how she looks at her mother when she replies.”

“Of course! she is well brought up, so far. But remember what I say. This delay annoys me. Finish it. I shall go into the country to perform my Easter duties. Let the affair be definitely settled when I return. If not, I seek another daughter-in-law.”

“My good mother,” said Raymond, kissing her hand, “I entreat you not to act hastily. I know you have the kindest intentions—”

“Of course. I have your interest at heart. Why else should I trouble myself? Your marriage entails a heavy responsibility on me—that of forming a daughter-in-law who may possibly prove an indocile and ungrateful subject.”

Madame invariably took a gloomy view of things in Lent. Her son knew this and pitied her.

“I assure you, mother, that if I marry this young English girl all such trouble will be spared you. Mees Estelle is formed to all the usages of the world already by her virtuous mother, a woman of the most distinguished, and very instructed, as you must have perceived.”

Madame shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. “I doubt if the English mode of forming be to my taste. However, I can’t say I have any particular objection to the girl; and truly the dowry is the principal thing. Only let the ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ be settled. That *I will* have, Raymond.”

“As soon as possible, mother.”

When madame spoke her “I will” in that tone, Raymond knew resistance was useless.

“Another thing,” madame continued. “Of course, we do not broach the subject of religion at once. But as soon as she becomes one of the family I shall see about having her instructed. It will be hard indeed, if, with a little judicious management, we do not bring her within the pale of the Church. Thou canst understand, of course, that I should dislike any one bearing our name to be damned eternally.”

“I entreat you, mother,” cried Raymond, anger struggling with politeness, “not to use such horrible expressions in speaking of Mees Estelle.”

“Why, what would you have?” returned madame. “There is no salvation out of the Church. How could the poor little thing avoid damnation if she died a heretic? It is not being married into a Catholic family that will save her.”

“I must be gone,” cried Raymond, starting up. “Mother, I kiss your hands.”

He dared not trust himself with his mother when she spoke in this strain. “Better—better a thousand times,” he muttered, as he regained his own apartment on the *entresol*, “live without a God, than acknowledge such a bugbear as the God of these Catholics! Surely—surely, if there is a Supreme Being—if—such homage as is offered to Him must be loathsome to His Majesty. No, Madame la Comtesse, you shall *not* make my wife

a Catholic. Her God is at any rate less of a monster than yours.”

Madame de Montaignu would have been greatly shocked had she known what was passing in her son’s mind, or had she heard what his Mentor, Monsieur de Luzarches, said to him, *à propos* of the match with Miss Russell.

“Religion, my dear boy,” said the baron, “is well enough for women, children, and men in their dotage. And for the women, since the fair creatures are so foolish and so weak that they must have some faith to cling to, the Protestant faith is the most convenient, on account of its dispensing with the sacrament of confession. Confession, my dear boy, is a nuisance, a breeder of discord; in a word, a most intolerable impertinence. I ought to know, *parbleu*, with a wife like the one I am blest with.”

Madame de Montaignu did not know of these heretical utterings, and was quite comfortable about Raymond’s soul. She was perfectly aware that he was not devout; but then it was not fashionable for young men to be devout. There would be plenty of time for that by-and-by. Witness her own husband, whose devotion now was both admirable and astonishing, and who had nevertheless sown a plentiful crop of wild oats in his time—a much more plentiful one than there seemed any prospect of Raymond’s sowing—and yet Monsieur le Comte had never possessed a tenth part of his son’s talent and *esprit*.

It was with no slight degree of trepidation that Raymond sought Mrs. Russell after this interview with his mother. Never in his life had he failed in getting the thing he wanted, and the prospect of failure in getting this thing—a wife—of all things in the world, was exasperating. He was wroth with his mother for her interference, wroth with himself for caring so much for a girl who had the power of rejection in her hands, and wroth with Harry Russell for not showing him more friendliness. In truth, the young lieutenant was not unfriendly; he considered Monsieur Raymond not bad for a Frenchman, but he found French conversation too great a tax on his philological powers, and he could not swallow Monsieur Raymond’s favorite mode of address in English, “my dear.” Raymond even felt angry for a moment with Mrs. Russell. But, unreasonable as was his mood, he soon had sense to perceive that Mrs. Russell was, and always had been, his best friend. He would never have had the slightest misgiving had he had the barest conception of her singular tenacity of purpose. That fragile, fairy-like creature had settled in her secret mind that her daughter was to marry Raymond after Easter. All through Lent she had been preparing Estelle for this event, never once swerving aside from its accomplishment, in spite of the child’s tears and entreaties to be let alone. She had satisfied herself of the advisability of taking Raymond as a son-in-law, and stuck to it, limpet-like, all the more for the unlooked-for opposition she met with from Estelle.

But Estelle was vanquished at last; and Mrs. Russell was able to send Raymond away elated, with a promise that he should see her daughter that evening.

The girl was very quiet; more automaton-like than usual, Raymond might have observed, had he been an uninterested by-stander. But he saw nothing except the perfect outline of her face, the

marble contour of her shoulders, and the good taste of her dress. He sat watching her as she played a noisy piece at a given sign from her mother, and thought of the story of Pygmalion. He too would breathe life into the marble maiden—would kindle love in her still heart by the power of his own love, and make her the crown and joy of his hitherto incomplete existence. And then, curiously enough, flashed across his mind, close upon the Greek myth, a sentence which he had heard or read somewhere:

"And God created man in His own image; . . . male and female created He them . . . and blessed them . . ."

Strange, these mythical ideas obtruding themselves where they were so peculiarly out of place; where the last new opera and the last new novel, and political gossip of the thinnest sort, formed the staple of conversation; where Mrs. Russell was already discussing bridal arrangements in a low voice with Madame de Luzarches. What had Raymond and Estelle to do with the Supreme, or with Pygmalion either? He smiled, and roused himself in time to thank his future wife as she finished her piece. And she, emboldened by the sunny look in his face, said:

"Do you smile because the piece is so noisy? Mamma always tells me to play that piece when she wants to talk." And then she stopped, frightened at having said so much.

"Perhaps I will tell you one day why I smiled," said Raymond. This was the first time she had ever spoken to him spontaneously. He thought it augured well.

There was some relief to Estelle now that the engagement was absolutely fixed. Louis Vivian's name was never mentioned. Her mother's favor was restored to her; she was kissed and caressed, and no longer upbraided with the cruel words, "disobedience," "obstinacy;" no longer told she was breaking her mother's heart. Yet the fit of obstinacy had never been overcome but for Mrs. Russell's heroic measures. She was sorry to have been forced to use them, but she could not brook defiance from the creature who had been pliant to her will from the hour when she had first been laid on her bosom. She told her one day that she had written to Louis Vivian, desiring him to cease from his pursuit. "And I flatter myself," she continued, "that there will be no renewal of the correspondence."

"You wrote to him, and never told me!" cried the girl, with upraised head and flashing eyes. "It was to me he wrote—to me—" She stopped, choked, blinded with passion for one moment. Mrs. Russell took quick advantage of the silence.

"He never ought to have written to you at all. It was an enormous piece of presumption on his part, of which I could scarcely imagine him to have been guilty, except for undue encouragement on your side. However, let the matter rest. I have answered his letter, and there is an end of it."

"When?" demanded Estelle, quivering in every limb, and looking at her mother as one woman looks at another who has done her deadly wrong.

"Oh, ages ago," said Mrs. Russell, lightly, as she left the room, pleased, yet ever so little frightened at the success of her few words.

"Ages ago!" A half-lie. But when a half-lie answers, why tell a whole one?

The girl's heart sank within her. Her mother had stabbed her with those two words. She knew now there was no hope. If Louis Vivian had loved her he would not have taken her mother's "No" for an answer. He would have trusted in her love, and written again and again, hoped against hope, looked, waited for the barest chance of a meeting. He had given her up, then! He, the patient, the enduring, had let her go, because of a half-dozen scornful lines in her mother's handwriting! And then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, her heart turned towards that mother. "Is it worth while," she thought, "to break her heart for this man who can give me up so easily? Why not content her? She will be happier when she sees me married. Why not Raymond de Montaigu as well as another?"

So the wedding-day was fixed, and Mrs. Russell relieved of half her anxiety.

"Very well," said Madame de Montaigu, when her son announced his approaching marriage with the English heiress. "I shall speak to my director immediately, and I shall endeavor, if possible, to obtain a private audience of Sa Grandeur tomorrow. We must see now about converting the poor little thing as quickly as we can."

Sa Grandeur the Archbishop of Toulouse was Madame de Montaigu's third cousin.

CHAPTER IX.

SA GRANDEUR.

It was evening. Delivered for a short space from episcopal cares, Sa Grandeur the Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse sat in his study, spectacles on nose, enjoying his newspaper. He was interrupted by his valet, who in a confidential manner announced Madame de Montaigu.

The Archbishop laid down his paper with a sigh, and took off his spectacles, muttering, "One can never get a moment's peace." Then he rose and received his cousin with the affectionate cordiality due to one who deemed herself a most faithful daughter of the Church.

The Archbishop was emphatically a man of the world; a man who believed it not only possible, but right and fitting, to make the best of both worlds. He had had a hard life, while striving to be all things to all men, before the cardinal's hat, that *summum bonum* of a Churchman's earthly wishes, had dangled within his reach. Now that he had got it, he allowed himself the luxury of speaking his mind on rare occasions—and emphatically on rare occasions only. For, from the constant habit of repression practised from his youth up—beginning from the time he entered the little seminary of Auch, at the age of nine—silence, and not speech—that is to say, the expression of his own thoughts, in contradistinction to the distillation of other men's thoughts through his brain and tongue—silence, I say, and not speech, had become most natural to him.

His attitude of forced attention soon changed to one of real interest, as Madame de Montaigu unfolded her errand. He listened, taking snuff with an air as profound as it was courtly, and displaying a hand ornamented with a magnificent diamond ring; both of which were objects of an inordinate degree of vanity. It was impossible for him to be ignorant of the fact that he gave

the benediction, aided by this jewelled hand, with a grace unequalled by any brother archbishop in France.

"And now, monseigneur," Madame de Montaigne concluded, "I rely upon you to help me."

"I could have wished the girl to be converted before the marriage took place, nevertheless," said monseigneur gravely.

Madame shrugged her shoulders.

"So should I. But we can't always have every thing we want. Just imagine my poor Raymond having to enter that Protestant temple! I shall not go, of course." (Here madame gave a most expressive shudder.) "But you see the mother stipulates so strictly for the free exercise of religion, that—that, in short, we—I, that is—felt it prudent to be quiet about this Protestant celebration. And frankly, monseigneur, it is a capital match for Raymond—and I am glad to have him range himself. And do you know, this girl would have been snapped up in no time—"

"Was there no heiress to be found in all Languedoc, that your son must pitch upon a heretic?" asked the archbishop with some severity.

"I looked out for one last year," madame answered, with a contrite sigh. "I spoke most particularly to the mother superior of the Sacré Cœur. But really they were such an ugly set of girls, that I dared not propose one of them to Raymond. And the only one with a dowry that I call respectable, was—well, monseigneur, she was the ugliest creature I ever saw in my life, and not of a very good family either. I do assure you I was at my wits' ends about a wife for Raymond, when all at once he pitched upon this girl, who is—religion apart—unexceptionable." And here madame proceeded to enlarge on divers hopeful signs she had perceived in her future daughter-in-law. "As to her conversion, I think every thing will depend on the kind of curé we get," she concluded.

"And that," said the archbishop, throwing himself back in his chair, and letting his jewelled hand hang down over the red velvet arm with artful carelessness, "that is precisely the most difficult part of the affair, comtesse. He must be a gentleman to the backbone, you say. I agree with you. But where shall we find him? Men of family, attainments, and so forth are not content to settle down to a miserable country pastorate of one hundred souls, the denizens of Château Montaigne included. And then this poor old curé, whom you want to get rid of, what am I to do with him, comtesse?"

"Dear me, what is a curé more or less to you?" replied Madame de Montaigne. "You can surely find a nook for him somewhere in your diocese. Mind, I say nothing against him, poor old man. I believe him to be admirably fitted for the guidance of those wretched peasant-souls; and all the less adapted for the reconciliation of this fastidious English girl to the Church."

"I know him," said Sa Grandeur, "a rough piece of goods. But this superfluous curé, where and how am I to lay my hand upon him?"

"Would not the Jesuit fathers supply what we want?" asked Madame de Montaigne, doubtfully.

"The Jesuit fathers! God forbid!" exclaimed the archbishop with a start. Then recollecting himself, he continued in a cautious whisper: "Have nothing to do with them, madame, as

you value your peace. These holy fathers are too clever by half. You don't want your daughter-in-law's dowry to go to fill their purse, do you?"

"I should think not, indeed," said madame, startled.

"Then what can you be about, even to hint at associating them with the pious work you contemplate? Look yonder"—he pointed over his shoulder to a window whence might be seen a tall spire, rising high above the irregular mass of buildings behind the garden of the archiepiscopal palace—"have you watched the progress of that church? I have. From the day the foundation-stone was laid, till now, the work has never stopped. Now the building is roofed in. One by one the stained-glass windows will appear, each emulating the other in richness of design. When finished, it will put to the blush, for splendor, for magnificence of outline, for richness of detail, every church and chapel in my diocese. Look at their seminary, at their preparatory college, two establishments in this one city, which three years ago knew them not. Do you know where and how they began? In an obscure mean house near the Jardin Royal, where they fitted up a miserable barn of a chapel that would scarcely hold a hundred souls. And now look at them: prosperous, self-satisfied, arrogant; credited, petted in the highest quarters. How have they managed? Where has the money come from? I'll tell you. They understand the art of leading captive silly women laden with sins. '*Penetrant domos, et captivas ducunt mulierculas oneratas peccatis, quæ ducuntur variis desideriis.*' Remember that all their establishments are self-supporting. Even in Paris that fundamental rule was rigidly enforced, at a time when the branch house was so poor that its inmates did not know where the next day's dinner was to come from. That's a fact!"

"These poor fathers! How wretched!" observed madame, who was by nature fond of good living.

"Bah!" returned Sa Grandeur, a cynical smile hovering over his thin lips; "it gave the Dominical prayer a meaning for once in their lives. '*Panem nostrum supersubstantialiam da nobis hodie.*' They sent the handsomest and most eloquent of the fathers on a begging mission to all the drawing-rooms. And take my word of archbishop, he did not return empty-handed. The rascal was hungry, and looked it, and made a profound impression thereby on the ladies' hearts. Dear, susceptible creatures! They passed scores of beggars in their daily promenades; hungry *canaille*, vociferous for stray coppers, which would have been forthcoming oftener had not aristocratic hands been too lazy to reach the purse in the pocket. But it is the nature of *canaille* to be hungry, one conceives that. But a handsome, hungry Jesuit father! That was indeed a touching spectacle in a Faubourg St. Germain drawing-room. Bah!" Throughout this philippic Sa Grandeur had preserved a subdued tone of voice.

"Surely you are too severe," murmured the comtesse.

"Not a bit. That branch-establishment has held its head on a level with the principal house ever since. No, no, dear comtesse. Don't have any thing to do with the Jesuit fathers if you value your peace. I have been worried enough by

them in one way and another, I can tell you. What do I know?" said Sa Grandeur, sinking his voice still lower; "perhaps this very conversation that you and I fondly imagine to be quite private and confidential, is being taken down word by word as we utter it, to be transmitted to Rome by to-morrow's post. The very walls have ears!"

"But," whispered the comtesse, with a stealthy glance at the thick velvet drapery that hung across the door, "you have the cardinalate, monseigneur; and surely that ought to place you beyond the reach of annoyance from the Order."

"If I were the Holy Father himself," rejoined the archbishop, "I should not be exempt. They can not wrest the cardinal's hat from me, but they may make it a very crown of thorns." He stopped, and then resumed hastily: "Take my advice, madame; let this conversation remain strictly confidential, and do not even mention to any one that you have been here. I do not mean that you should deny the fact if you happen to be taxed with it. You may depend upon my not forgetting to look out for the sort of curé that will be likely to suit you." Then Sa Grandeur rose, and Madame de Montaigu knew that his rising was an intimation that his time was too precious to be further trespassed on. "Adieu," said he; "congratulate your son from me: he will have a charming little wife. As for Madame Roussel—"

Sa Grandeur stopped himself in time. He had been going to say that Madame Russell was still more charming than her daughter, but had remembered suddenly that Madame de Montaigu could not bear to hear a pretty woman praised: especially when that woman happened to be about the same age as herself. "As for Madame Roussel," he repeated, after an almost imperceptible pause, "she only wants to be a Frenchwoman to be very charming."

"Adieu, monseigneur. Remember me in your prayers," said Madame de Montaigu.

"Without fail, dear lady." And as the velvet curtains fell over his cousin's exit, the archbishop threw himself back in his chair, muttering, "I wish that tiresome woman may not get me into a scrape with the holy fathers sooner or later."

CHAPTER X.

VIVIAN COURT.

ABOUT a mile from the small village of Wembury, on the south coast of Devon, stood Vivian Court, the country residence of Sir George Vivian, Bart., and high-sheriff for the county. It was built round a quadrangle, and lay in a hollow surrounded by trees, which, together with the high undulating ground about it, shut out a view of the sea; a loss for which ample compensation was found in the superior beauty and luxuriance of the rhododendrons and magnolias growing in clumps on the lawn, unscathed by the nipping blasts from the Channel. It was a curious old place. Artists and antiquarians came to look at it during the absence of the family, and were paraded through the suites of rooms under the guidance and supervision of the under-housekeeper, who sailed along on such occasions with great state and dignity, and, keys in hand, gave the usual parrot-like description of the numerous ob-

jects of interest, both of art and antiquity. There were collections of almost every thing. There was a cabinet of bronzes, another of cameos, another of precious stones, a fourth of minerals; besides which, there was the museum proper, which contained, in addition to the usual stock of doubtful bones, stuffed alligators, and tomahawks, the embalmed remains of one of the Pharaohs, brought from Egypt just after the victory of the Nile. There was a gallery, too; a long, dismal room looking north, with rows of portraits of the knights, squires, and dames of the house, down to Lady Caroline Vivian, with her two boys at her knee, exhibited in 185—.

The exterior of the house was picturesque, whether seen from the quadrangle or the gardens. The quadrangle was covered with fine soft grass, intersected by four paths, which met at a large pond in the middle, and were paved with small stones in a zigzag pattern. One of these paths led to the gardens through a covered archway under the clock-tower; a second to the iron-studded gate with its mighty knocker, which gave entrance to the great hall; and the two others to doors in the lateral part of the building. In an angle of the grassy space was a flowering myrtle which reared its head above the highest chimney. The windows looking out on the quadrangle were small diamond-paned casements, dating some three hundred and odd years back. On the other side these had given way to bay windows, guillotine windows, every sort of window, in short: the south-east and south-west fronts contained an unbroken chain of window history, from the early Tudor down to the modern style filled with plate-glass. The library and drawing-room windows occupied the whole of the south-west ground-floor, looking out on a beautifully kept lawn, with clumps of flowering shrubs and beds of choice flowers interspersed, which made the air heavy with their perfume.

It was spring-time; a bright, sunny, treacherous day, very bleak and biting near the shore, but suave and smiling within the precincts of Sir George Vivian's shrubberies and gardens; where tulips and hyacinths, and other spring flowers, coaxed alike by nature and art, put forth their blossoms a full fortnight earlier than in other places to which the winds had freer entrance. Usually, on such a day as this, the drawing-room windows were thrown open, and you might see Lady Caroline Vivian seated at her writing-table or her embroidery frame, or else out wandering among the flower-beds with gardening-gloves and a broad hat on, and scissors and Swiss basket at her side.

But on this spring morning the windows were all shut, and the blinds drawn down. Not a soul was to be seen in the garden, not a sound could be heard except the buzz of an early bee among the hyacinths, or the note of the cuckoo fitting in and out of the seringa bushes.

By-and-by the opening of one of the drawing-room windows broke the silence, although the action was performed stealthily. Two people issued forth, one of them a woman in a widow's cap. Her companion, a dark tall man, with a stoop in his shoulders, shut the window noiselessly, and then the two walked on the grass, avoiding the gravelled path, to a point where the lawn was separated by a wire fence and a ditch from the park beyond.

These two people were Louis Vivian and his mother.

They crossed a wooden bridge, and took the road leading through the plantation down to the sea.

They walked on slowly and silently, till a turn in the path hid the house from sight. Then they quickened their pace, and the widow spoke.

"I am glad you came out with me. I can't enjoy your society in that miserable house yonder, with those two poor boys lying dead in one room and their mother raving in another."

Louis Vivian made no answer. He walked along with a heavy abstracted air, as though he had not heard the observation addressed to him.

That he had heard, was evident; for a moment after he raised his head, and said, half to himself, looking vacantly at the outline of firs against the sky:

"Yes; it is a very sad thing. Poor Uncle George!"

"The fashion of this world vanishes away," observed the widow. "The last time I was here, Louis, Lady Caroline insulted me."

"She did!" exclaimed her son, breaking a small switch he held in his hand. "She insulted you, and you never told me, mother! And you staid, and let me stay! Mother, how could you!" His face flushed, and deep lines crossed his forehead. "If I had known," he cried, throwing the remnant of the switch away, "I'd have gone to Uncle Vivian. I'd have spoken to him about it then and there."

"And made mischief for both of us," said the widow, laying her hand on his arm. "No, my dear. Sir George had been so kind to me—"

"Yes, he gave you a hundred pounds once," Louis Vivian muttered between his teeth.

"—So kind, that I might well bear a hard word or two from his wife. Besides, as a Christian I was bound to accept all such slights as part of my daily cross. The flesh was weak, but for your sake I endeavored to resist the temptation of a quarrel, and through mercy I was upheld till the close of my sojourn here last year. And now, see, the Lord has laid His hand upon her, and she is brought very low. Truly, His ways are mysterious, past finding out."

"I see nothing mysterious in it," Louis replied, with a slight curl of his lip. He was very fond of his mother, but her sanctimonious phrases were sometimes a source of great annoyance to him. "It is as clear as daylight, mother, if you will but look at it in a straightforward, matter-of-fact way. The poor boys brought the seeds of scarlet fever back with them from school, and their mother has taken the disease from them. And, owing to her distress and fatigue, it is likely to prove fatal!"

"Ah," said Mrs. Vivian, shaking her head solemnly, "but all these things are pre-ordained. If you could only hear dear Mr. Gillicks on that point! He is such an awakening preacher."

"Now, mother, don't begin bothering me about your ministers, for I am not going to have any thing to do with them, and you know it."

"But, my dear boy, think of your eternal interests—of your poor soul."

"My poor soul won't be benefited by my listening to—no, sitting under—that's the phrase, isn't it?—sitting under a fellow who sings through his nose, and drops his h's."

"Ah, my dear, you'll be on your death-bed too one day, like that poor creature up there, and what will carnal learning profit you then?"

"Not much, I dare say," was Louis's reply, in a most irreverent tone.

"You ought to improve the solemn warning before you," she pursued.

"Is that all you wanted to say to me, mother?" he asked. "Because, if so, I'll return to the house. I have plenty of work to do."

"No; don't go in yet," said the widow hastily.

"I want to know whether you think it would be proper for me to sit with Lady Caroline. I don't want to appear hard-hearted, and if I never go near her, people may talk, you know."

"Afraid of Mrs. Grundy, eh, mother?" said Louis.

"N—o," said the widow, with a slight touch of hesitation; "only you see we were never what could be called friendly, and now the Lord has taken her two sons, and every body must know I'm the future baronet's mother—unless Sir George marries again, which is not at all likely."

Louis Vivian winced. He knew perfectly well that it might be as, his mother said, but he had had a great liking for his two little dead cousins, and he did not want to dwell upon his altered prospects more than he could help. He felt annoyed with his mother for her bluntness.

Mrs. Vivian went on:

"And so between the fear of being thought presuming on the one hand, and neglectful on the other, I really don't know how to act."

Her son considered for a moment, and then replied: "I don't see the slightest necessity for your going to Lady Caroline's room. She has her husband, her doctor, her maid, and the nurse: four people in constant attendance. You would only be an intruder."

"I am so glad you think so, my dear," said the widow, with a sigh of relief.

She would have once more improved her opportunity of exhortation, but something in her son's face warned her not to pursue the subject.

At length their walk brought them to the plantation, and they stood in full view of the sea. The gray Mewstone rose opposite; to the right lay the breakwater, and beyond it Mount Edgecumbe, with its shady woods and green lawns. The Cornish coast stretched away to the west, a long line of red losing itself in the misty horizon. The sea was dotted far and near with craft of all kinds, from the white-sailed schooner to the dusky fishing-smack, of which scores were congregated between the Whitesands and Bovisand.

Louis Vivian's face brightened as he looked on all this. He enjoyed all that he saw around him with a zest of which habitual dwellers in the country know nothing. What to them is only suggestive of stagnation was rest and renovation to the hard-working London barrister.

Mrs. Vivian was tired, and sat down on a bench to rest, placing herself, however, with but little regard for the prospect; her point of attraction was her son Louis, whose back was all she could see, as he stood looking out towards the gray Mewstone. It was quite happiness enough for her to be sitting near him, and to know that he was enjoying himself, albeit she could not understand why pretty views and country air should exercise such a fascination over her clever son. She lived in the country, and thought it dull

enough; she would have willingly exchanged it for London, only the place where Louis lived was so confined that it seemed to choke her, and he as yet could afford no better. So she remained in lodgings in Dorking, and there he went to see her as often as he could. These visits were literally her only pleasures, unless making and mending her son's linen may be classed as such. There was, it is true, the occasional entertainment of an itinerant preacher belonging to the dissenting body of which she was a member. But such entertainments were few and far between, and were as much misery as pleasure to her, because, in spite of the blessing invoked upon her by the preacher before partaking of her bounty, she knew in her own secret heart that she grudged the meats spread on the board, that she would far rather have put the money by for some possible want, some rainy day—not for herself, in justice let it be said—but for her beloved son.

Poor Mrs. Vivian! her secret parsimony may be excused. Her life had had many a hard and bitter day in it since her handsome husband's death. He had speculated wildly, and, dying in the midst, had left her to bear the brunt of the failure of all his schemes. People were loud in their blame of the dead man; even those who had not the most remote interest in the matter made as great an outcry as if they had had a large stake in his concerns. The widow was the great sufferer, and she suffered in silence. She made good, as far as lay in her power, all claims on her husband's estate, and retired into obscurity on a bare two hundred a year, a pittance—less than Lady Caroline Vivian's upper housekeeper's salary—upon which she both contrived to live herself and to educate Louis, the only son left to her out of a family of seven children. For her struggles and sacrifices she had her reward in the deep devotion of her son as he grew up and learnt under what untoward circumstances she had been left at his father's death.

"Mother," he said to her once, "dear old mother, you are the noblest woman that ever lived. Mother, I don't know whether I honor or love you most; because you might have kept a great deal which you sacrificed voluntarily: you might, and no man would have dared wag his finger. And you did not: you were courageous enough to be poor. My strong, brave old mother!"

It had been worth even a longer trial, the widow thought, to hear such words as these from her son when he came to man's estate. At this present time the trial, in so far as poverty went, was much lessened. There is a balance in the lives of most people; neither unmitigated sunshine nor unmitigated shade. Now that Louis was no longer dependent in any way upon her slender resources, she had to fear for his health. This fear had first presented itself to her mind two summers ago, when his system had suddenly begun to tell of overwork, and he had been advised to lay by for a time and go abroad. It was wonderful air indeed, thought the widow, which could send him back so changed for the better. She was loud in her praises of the Pyrenees: they had made quite another man of her dear Louis, she said gratefully. He, smiling, thought how much of the brightness infused into his daily life was the work of Estelle Russell.

He was thinking of her now, as he stood in-

haling the briny air. He was wondering whether she had ever received his letter, or whether her stern mother had kept it from her. He was considering whether to write to her again, or to write to Mrs. Russell, or to wait a while longer; not fretting, not chafing, but considering. Not the shadow of a doubt of her fidelity had ever entered his mind since that day at Canterets when, as he bade her adieu, something in her sweet face kindled the fire smouldering within him, and he spoke out his love to her; told her his life was bound up in hers henceforth, and that rejection at her hands would be a lifelong sorrow. But she, with her gray eyes veiled, and her lips trembling childlike, had replied, "I believe in you; I trust you—as I trust myself." And he had returned to London with a hope that made the days bright even in the midst of November fogs. But he kept it to himself as yet; it was a delicious secret, to be hugged and fondled and hid away even from his mother. It would be time enough to speak of it when the wished-for answer came.

There was a long silence between mother and son, interrupted at length by the arrival of a tall footman, who, in consideration of the present presumptive-heirship of the baronet's nephew, had condescended to come so far from the house to inform him that luncheon was on the table. A week ago, the page would have been the bearer of the message. But things were changed; and in Mr. Louis the *vàletaille*, from butler downward, saw a possible master.

"The luncheon-bell had not been rung," the footman said, "for fear of its disturbing her ladyship."

"How is Lady Caroline now?" Louis inquired.

"Very bad indeed, sir; worse, if any thing, I heard her maid say. Sir George won't leave her, sir."

Louis gave his mother his arm, and they returned to the house. There was luncheon laid out for two in the dining-room, on what appeared to Mrs. Vivian a scale of unprecedented magnificence. She had always seen it much the same on former visits to Vivian Court, but then she was a nobody, and she had merely considered the show of silver vases and Bohemian glass and costly china that passed before her eyes at each meal as so many texts for silent moralizing. Now, in spite of her humility, in the very teeth of all her efforts after what she believed to be a true spiritual life, she found herself in a frame of self-congratulation, of enjoyment almost. She felt conscious every moment of being the future baronet's mother, and she could not help making a mental inventory of effects. All that ancient family plate glittering on the sideboard, all that priceless Palissy ware—the only thing, her husband had often said, in which he envied his brother the baronet—all that, besides the broad lands stretching along the banks of the pretty river Yesm, the mining property in Cornwall, the estates there; and the house in Hyde Park Gardens, where Lady Caroline "received" during the season—all this would be the portion of her boy, as she still fondly called the tall, stooping, silent man sitting opposite her.

She looked round, inhaling the atmosphere of luxurious refinement that filled the room, and thought,

"After all our poverty and our struggling, it has come to this. My dear boy—my good, hard-working, self-denying Louis—will be Sir Louis Vivian."

Thinking all this, she nevertheless admired the air of unconsciousness which pervaded Louis's behavior. "He knows it all as well as I do," she thought, "but it does not alter him in the least."

When they rose from the table she asked him what he was going to do.

"I have some proof-sheets to look over," was the reply.

"Can't that wait?" she asked with some impatience.

"Wait! My dear mother, it's for a most important work; and I must have them ready to send when the postman calls at five o'clock."

"At least," she said, as he turned to leave her, "you might bring them down into the library, instead of remaining shut up in your own room. I shan't disturb you, you know."

So the two sat together in the library that afternoon, she with her knitting and he with his proof-sheets. And, like a good, wise mother, she never spoke till his work was finished and laid on the hall table. Then she looked up and pointed to the vacant seat beside her, saying:

"My boy, here's room for you."

And Louis came and threw himself down on the sofa, and stretched his ungainly length to his heart's content.

"What a dear old mother it is!" he said. "I wonder how many women could hold their tongues for three hours, when they saw a fellow was busy!"

"Tis not every woman who has such a clever son as you," was the answer. "How could any one speak if they thought they were spoiling a man's work?"

The sunshine had faded away, and the evening wind was blowing chilly, when Sir George entered the room. Both rose to meet him, but neither spoke. It seemed such a mockery to ask "How is she?" Mrs. Vivian forgot all about her son's prospects when she saw the baronet's distracted face. He threw himself into a chair like a man worn out. Louis silently took a seat beside him.

"I have been quite rude to you, Mrs. Vivian," Sir George said presently; "but I am sure you have excused me."

Mrs. Vivian remarked that he must be sadly worn out. Was there any thing she could do?

Nothing. Sir George shook his head. He left the room before long, saying he was going to take a turn on the terrace, and would they excuse his not coming in to dinner?

Mrs. Vivian's mind was in a conflicting state that evening. There was death in the house, and dangerous sickness; there was no knowing who of the household might next be laid low. It was a time for prayer and for self-examination. She wished to pray; she did pray, both for herself and for every member of that household; but, as the remembrance of the one great contingency ever and anon returned to her, she found herself dwelling involuntarily on the splendor and profusion which at no distant period she had regarded as a vain show, only of importance to the carnal-minded. She would have preferred her own dingy lodgings that evening. It seemed

to her that she would not have felt so carnally-minded in her dull little room, with one candle, as she felt here in the Vivian Court drawing-room, with its pictures and mirrors, and its chandeliers in a blaze of light. As the evening wore on, every one seemed more anxious. Sir George did not appear. The house grew strangely silent. Neither Mrs. Vivian or her son could talk to each other, but sat side by side; he with a book from the library shelves, she with her Bible, speculating after her fashion on the future to which the poor soul up stairs was passing.

And about midnight the housekeeper came in and told them in whispers that my lady was gone, and that Sir George was in a state of distraction.

Lady Caroline, according to Mrs. Vivian's stern creed, had never been convinced of sin. She had lived a worldly life; and from the nature of her illness there had not even been the possibility of a deathbed repentance. But Mrs. Vivian forgot, now that she was dead, the antipathy with which the daughter of earls had regarded her *parvenu* connection; and her distress was deep, when in her nightly devotions she remembered Lady Caroline, and broke off suddenly in her supplication; she could no longer pray for her soul.

CHAPTER XI.

A PLEASANT ENGLISH HOUSEHOLD.

Not far from Wembury Church stood a red brick, one-storied building, dignified by the high-sounding title of Wembury Hall. It differed in no respect from the many country residences found in the West, built more or less on the pattern of old Queen Charlotte's house at Kew, and specially adapted, it would seem, to country squires with large families and moderate incomes. It had a portico—all such houses have porticoes—supported on a pair of spindle-shafted white columns. On either side this excrescence were two windows, and in the upper story five; window-frames with small panes, three in a row; wood-work and sills painted white—a chilly, cheerless white: windows that stared hard and blank at you, repudiating all romance, in spite of the Virginia creeper that climbed lovingly up their frames, and thrust its pink tendrils into the chinks of the wood, as an infant thrusts its innocent fingers into the stranger's bosom—windows, in fine, which declared once and forever that they were plain, matter-of-fact apertures, wall-piercings to let in a moderate quantity of air and light, and no more.

It was the downright look of the windows that decided Admiral Maurice on taking Wembury Hall, when he was placed on the retired list. It had a sensible, ship-shape look about it, he said. Moreover, it was not far inland, and the rent, from its being distant from a town, was very moderate. This last was the most important point with the admiral, a man with half a dozen daughters of all ages, all wanting to be provided for, as he told them angrily about once a week. These daughters were the grief of his life. He had wanted boys, and the boys had never come; only this half-dozen of good-for-nothing girls, whom he daily wished at Jericho.

Wembury Hall was as commonplace inside as

it was out. There was the usual quantity of stuffed birds, Indian bows and arrows, and third-rate pictures. The only feature to distinguish its interior from any other small country-house was the number of its clocks and barometers. There were four barometers; one in the porch, one in the vestibule, one in the admiral's dressing-room, and one in the passage up stairs. As for clocks, they literally swarmed. And they all struck. That was the most aggravating feature about them. If they had but indicated the flight of time by the pointing of their hands on the dial-plate alone, so that all who chose to run might read—well; but every one of them told the hour, and a good many struck the quarters as well. There was no possibility of ignoring the time of day in that house, unless you became blind and deaf at once. Moreover, there was a Chinese gong, with a sepulchral, judgment-day note, enough to destroy any body with delicate nerves. This gong was never silent from morn till night. People were gonged to breakfast, luncheon, dinner, tea, and supper, besides family prayers twice a day, and a kind of supplementary service which went by the name of "morning reading."

One word about the mistress of this commonplace house, whose motto seems to be "Tempus fugit;" though, after all, the title of mistress is but ill-applied to one who never took upon herself to give an order. Mrs. Maurice had been in her youth a very silly, perfectly amiable, perfectly beautiful woman. The amiability and the silliness remained in full force, the beauty had almost faded away. Her only visible mission seemed to lie in keeping up the stock of drawing-room anti-macassars, chaperoning her daughters, and personating the scape-goat whereupon the admiral might vent his ire at some uncome-at-able person—as the first lord of the admiralty, for instance, or Joe the stable-boy. We have said before that Julia from her earliest girlhood had completely set aside her mother's authority. More than this; she even made her little whims and peculiarities the butt whereon to exercise her wit. Mrs. Maurice was undeniably whimsical. She was nervous; and nervous people, especially when not naturally strong-minded, are apt to take illogical fancies into their heads. A loving daughter would either have been blind to these whims and causeless fancies, or else have striven tenderly to hide them from every eye. But Julia had not a spark of tenderness in her.

Mrs. Maurice, among other weaknesses, had that of breakfasting in bed. In this George Augustus Sala, for one, would have sympathized with her. The admiral did not. The inevitable gong sounded at a quarter to eight for prayers. At the stroke of eight, winter and summer, Henrietta began to pour out the tea and the admiral to cut up the loaf. As the half-hour struck from the timepiece in the drawing-room and the clock in the hall, the admiral would rise from the table and walk round to all the clocks, watch in hand, and then examine the barometers and make his observations on the weather.

Mrs. Maurice, poor thing, liked to dawdle over her breakfast, and taking it in bed was the only way to manage this. She had another reason, but one that she never put into words herself, and would have thought herself a very wicked woman if she had: and that was, that it insured

her a short respite from her irascible husband's society.

She certainly never could have written a book of her morning meditations; I doubt whether she ever had any. She used to consider what she would like to do, or to have, sometimes; as, for instance, that she would like—if it were fine in the afternoon, and the admiral had no objection, and Julia did not require it herself—to have the pony-carriage and drive into town to get herself a new cap, or a pattern of a *lacet* collar, or some Shetland wool to try that new stitch in *Middle*. Riego's last knitting-book. With a good deal of dawdling, first over her breakfast and then over her toilet, Mrs. Maurice would get through the morning. No one ever knew her leave her room till one o'clock, however tempting the day might be out of doors. Then she would appear at the luncheon-table, listen in silence to the admiral's obnoxious remarks, and answer inquiries after her health with an invariable "Pretty well, thank you"—a response which served as a target for the sharpening of Julia's wit, whenever there happened to be a visitor present, or a new governess.

"My mamma," she would say, "is always pretty well. I have left off asking her how she is, because I am so sure beforehand of the answer. For years I never remember her to have been any thing but 'pretty well.' She never will admit that she is quite flourishing. There would be something the matter, you know, if she only took time to think before she spoke. 'Pretty well' is a safe compromise. Have you never noticed that people who are never very well are just those who are never very ill? Curious thing, is it not?"

Mrs. Maurice knew better than to stop Julia when she was in one of her mocking moods. Once she had attempted to stem the tide of that young lady's impertinence. Her husband had looked up, and, only being aware that she was finding fault—not having attended to the piece of ill-bred, unfilial behavior which had preceded it—had sharply desired her to let Julia alone. She remembered to hold her peace on such occasions ever afterwards, and her annoyance was only betrayed by a flushed cheek and a nervous little cough. Perhaps she wept in the solitude of her own room. If she did, no one knew or cared. Henrietta was devoted to the poor, and the younger ones had their own school-room duties and their own little plans and amusements, which Julia directed. Not one of them ever thought of penetrating to "mamma's room." Once there, Mrs. Maurice was as completely separated from them all as if they had not belonged to her. She might fret and cry as long as she pleased, and, when tired of crying, she might return to the drawing-room with her crochet-work, quite sure that no one would take the trouble to notice her red eyes. She was very silly—provokingly so at times—but she was very amiable, and had a large capacity for affection. The undeserved coldness and neglect she experienced at her daughters' hands made her heart very sore sometimes, although she was not clever enough to say so, or to remonstrate in words that would have been worth their attention. And yet she had done her duty by them all as far as she knew, and she loved them all very dearly, even Julia, who took about as little notice of her as if she had

been an old chair, excepting when she was wanted to act as chaperone; and then Julia exercised her supervision only in order to make her mother, as she phrased it, "fit to be seen." For Mrs. Maurice, like a good many middle-aged ladies, was completely in the dark as to the amount of cap that was good for her. And Julia, of course, did not choose to take a chaperone who might in any way throw discredit on herself in the matter of appearance. "If you don't care about looking like an old cook," she would say, "I do. And I won't have you wear that cap. If you will make yourself a guy whenever I want you to take me out, I won't go at all."

What, after all, could be expected of a daughter whose earliest recollections were that papa was always calling mamma "silly?"

Lizzie, Lucy, Emily, and Clara were still in the school-room, the plague and terror of a conscientious, middle-aged governess, who lived in a state of chronic dismay at her deficiencies, and strove to drive grammar, geography, history, and a few *ologies* into their heads, at the cost of many a throb to her own.

It must be admitted, however, that Miss Brydges went rather too far when she turned their daily stroll in the lanes and fields into a peripatetic botanical lecture. But the poor woman was not without some excuse. The last governess had been summarily dismissed because Clara, on being put through her chronology by the Admiral one day at luncheon, had given 56 B.C. as the date of William the Conqueror, and had stuck to it, averring that Miss Harris had told her so that very morning. Clara had had her ears boxed, and Miss Harris had been discharged as incapable.

To escape the fate of her predecessor, Miss Brydges hit upon the plan of constant *impromptu* examinations, in order to sound the depths of her pupils' ignorance. And having found, during one of these, that they were completely ignorant of botany, she from that time made their walks grievous to them by her botanical lectures.

To-day Lizzie and Emily had quietly dropped behind, leaving Lucy and Clara to Miss Brydges, who, with one on each side of her, discoursed learnedly upon phanerogamia and cryptogamia to their unwilling ears.

Lizzie had been partly emancipated from school-room thralldom during her sister's absence from home. She had been to several balls, and longed for more. Julia, she knew, would be against her being taken out, and she wanted to enjoy herself as much as possible before Julia came back.

"It was so nice at Government House last night," she said. "I danced fourteen dances, and every one of my partners were nice. Sir Henry Reade, the aide-de-camp, was most particularly attentive, and the general came up and spoke to me, and asked mamma if she had any more pretty daughters at home. I think, without flattering myself, you know, that I've made quite a sensation for the short time I've been out."

"Oh," sighed Emily, who was only sixteen, "how dreadful to think that I have to stay in the school-room two years more, learning history and German and all that stuff. Much good it will be to me after I come out. Lizzie, I do wish you would coax pa to let ma take me out just once, before Ju comes back."

Lizzie shook her head gravely. "It would be no earthly good my trying. Papa would box my ears if I said any thing about it. Never mind, Emmy, two years will soon be over."

"It seems an awful long time, though," sighed Emily.

"Well, you know, I shouldn't have gone out at all this winter, if Ju had been here. She wouldn't have let me."

"I wish Ju would make haste and marry somebody," was Emily's next remark. "I'm sure it's high time. She's getting on to five-and-twenty."

"How do you know?" asked Lizzie, eagerly.

"Because I looked in papa's big Bible, where all our names are written. And only think, Lizzie, Henrietta is twenty-nine! Poor Hen!"

"Twenty-nine! Only one year from thirty! How enormously old! I think I should be ready to drown myself, if I were to live till twenty-nine without even having had one offer, like Hen," said Lizzie, in a tone expressive of contemptuous pity.

"Ah, but then, you know, Hen is not pretty. I don't think she will ever marry any body unless it be a clergyman. And you are so different from Hen. I think you are prettier than Ju even. Won't mamma catch it for taking you out, when she comes home!"

"I am not going to be put back into the school-room for her, now I am partly out of it, whatever she may say," replied Lizzie.

"Oh, come, there's Miss Brydges shrieking back at us; and there's the Vivian carriage. Where can Sir George be going so soon after his wife's death, I wonder?"

The occupant of the carriage was not Sir George, however, but Louis Vivian, on his way to catch the evening train to London.

The girls went home with their governess: Emily, Clara, and Lucy to the school-room tea; and Lizzie to dress for dinner.

"Where's Henrietta?" said the admiral, giving a sharp glance round the dining-room as he entered.

The admiral was short and stumpy, and spoke with a loud voice and authoritative manner. He was in the habit of treating his household much like a man-of-war's crew, and loud and long were his complainings at finding seven women harder to manage than seven hundred men. Henrietta devoted herself to visiting the poor and sick in the parish, and when, as happened on this day, she returned late from her long rounds, the admiral was without mercy for her unpunctuality; and after an angry tirade against the lower classes, would wind up by ordering her, on pain of his displeasure, to cease altogether from parish visiting.

"Where's Henrietta?" he demanded sharply. There was a dead silence. Wallis, the footman, stood with his hand ready to lift the cover off the soup-tureen. He knew where Henrietta was, for he had himself carried the message from the poor woman at Revelstoke who had begged her to come that afternoon. But every one in the house was more or less afraid of the admiral; and it was not till he repeated the question that his wife answered in a low voice that Henrietta was out seeing a sick woman who lived four miles off.

"What's that? Speak up, ma'am!" shouted the admiral, who was rather deaf.

"Gone to see a poor woman," said Mrs. Maurice, in a higher key.

The admiral said a short, snappish grace, and sat himself down with a grunt. As he finished his soup, he suddenly turned round on Wallis.

"You were two minutes late to-day!"

"I sounded the gong, sir, exactly as the hall-clock struck six."

"I tell you you were two minutes late by my watch, and I set the hall-clock by it last night. It had not lost this morning, and I don't believe it has lost now, unless any one has been tampering with it."

Lizzie was sometimes inclined to be pert. She looked up, and said;

"How can any one tamper with the clock, papa, when you keep it locked on purpose?"

The admiral had very bright, prominent eyes. He glared at Lizzie across the table.

Lizzie looked down abashed.

"Young woman! if you were a mid, I'd mast-head you! Is this the subordination to your superiors which you learn from Miss Brydges in the school-room? Because, if so, she doesn't understand her business, and the sooner she packs off the better. I'll have subordination taught in my house—and practised too."

"But Lizzie is not under Miss Brydges any longer," Mrs. Maurice interposed, in a plaintive voice. "You forget; she only goes into the school-room for Italian and singing now."

"Don't interfere, ma'am," snarled the admiral, who never troubled himself to be civil to his wife, even before the servants.

"Well, you know," Mrs. Maurice pursued, thinking she was saying a very clever thing, "it is quite impossible for Miss Brydges to teach them every thing. I am sure, as it is, she teaches much more than most governesses would, for the salary you give her."

The admiral would not have relished this remark at any time; but, being put out already by his eldest daughter's unpunctuality, it was most ill-calculated to restore him to good-humor.

He turned sharply round on his wife.

"Madam!!" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder.

Mrs. Maurice coughed nervously, and bent her head over her plate.

Not a word more was spoken; and the meal was half-finished when Henrietta glided into the room and took her place beside her sister.

Henrietta Maurice was decidedly the plain one of the family. She was short, had a turned-up nose, and a wide mouth, and nothing clever in her face to atone for the want of regular features. A long time ago, when a girl in her teens, she had had a pretty complexion; but that had vanished, and left no trace behind in her thin bloodless cheeks. Her mouth looked like the mouth of a woman who had foresworn laughter for the whole of her earthly existence. Her eyes were sunken, and lines of weariness were written already on her forehead. There was a settled, gray, statuesque look about her altogether, which sometimes provoked her father into telling her that she wanted a good shaking up.

Years before, when Admiral (then Captain) Maurice was commanding a ship on the New Zealand station, and Mrs. Maurice and her children were living quietly in a little cottage on Laira Green, Henrietta had met her fate in the shape

of a young surgeon with whom she had fallen deeply in love. The measles were in the nursery, and Mr. Vandeleur had frequent opportunities of observing the elder sister's devotion to the suffering little ones. Mrs. Maurice thought him clever and attentive, and encouraged his visits after his medical attendance was no longer necessary. She saw that Henrietta took pleasure in his society, and it never once entered her head that her husband could object to Mr. Vandeleur as a son-in-law. The young people had been engaged for several months, when Captain Maurice came home, and learnt from his unsuspecting wife of the love which had sprung up during his absence. His rage both at his wife and daughter knew no bounds. He commanded Henrietta to give up every letter she had of Mr. Vandeleur's. He burnt them with his own hands, and wrote a furious epistle to the surgeon, demanding his daughter's correspondence. The Irishman might have answered him in the same kind, had he not received at the same time a piteous, tear-blotted letter of renunciation from Henrietta. Disgusted with what he supposed to be her fickleness in giving him up at the first angry blast that blew, he inclosed her letters to her, with a few lines of hasty reproach. Shortly afterwards he left the neighborhood. With his departure, all the light seemed to fade out of Henrietta's life. She utterly refused all girlish gayeties; she shut herself within herself; ceased to take an interest in the children; eschewed even her mother's companionship. She could not forget, though she believed she forgave, her mother's want of support to the engagement she had allowed to grow up before her eyes. She did not take into account the terror Mrs. Maurice experienced whenever her husband went into one of his rages. She bowed before them as a reed before the wind. She had not dared exonerate herself, much less uphold her daughter.

But Henrietta only felt that she had been shamefully treated, and gradually her heart grew cold alike to mother and father, and to the young, growing-up sisters. Her only pleasure seemed to consist in attending church services and visiting the poor and sick, whose sorrows made her forget for the time the gnawing at her own heart.

She saw Julia petted and spoilt because she was pretty; she saw Lizzie growing up pert and self-willed. And she thought bitterly, "Either of these two would get what they wanted; but I was never indulged, even when it would have been good for me and another."

This feeling, never expressed, was the canker which combined with the disappointment to eat away all the loveliness from Henrietta's existence. At twenty-nine she was a cold, heavy-hearted woman, living a sluggish, morbid, pseudo-religious life, not worthy the name of life. When her father asked her surlily why she persisted in avoiding society, she would answer that she never intended to marry, and therefore had little inducement to go out. The very few whom she cared to see she could see at home. And the lines in her face would deepen as she spoke, and her mouth draw downward at the corners, till she looked older and grayer than ever.

She sat now, more like a stone than a woman, silently eating what Wallis had handed to her from the sideboard. It was a Friday: she therefore only partook of bread and vegetables. The

admiral was preoccupied; had he observed her abstinence from meat he would have thundered at her for half an hour. Lizzie saw it, and nudged her sister under the table. Henrietta took no notice; she was accustomed to being nudged. The sisters had numerous telegraphic signals in use among themselves when their father was by.

The admiral's voice broke the silence.

"What do you mean by coming in when dinner is half over?" he asked brusquely.

"Papa," replied Henrietta, in the icy, toneless voice she used at home, "I have been to visit a sick woman, and I could not possibly get back sooner. I had some difficulty in finding the house; it was a long way beyond Revelstoke; and the road was almost impassable."

"Very well; then you should have set out earlier," was the admiral's prompt retort.

"I went as soon as I could; as soon as I knew I was wanted, that is."

"Then you should not have gone at all. It's twenty minutes to seven by my watch; and I ask you, Miss Maurice, whether you consider it proper ladylike behavior to be tramping up and down country lanes alone after six o'clock at night? Because if you do, I don't, and I won't have it done."

"The days are getting longer now," hazarded Lizzie.

"Hold your tongue, miss," said the admiral.

"Papa," replied Henrietta, quietly, "I could not help going. My poor people look to me for help, and I can not deny them. Little as I can do, that is better than nothing; and when every thing else is out of my power, I can give them a kind word, and they are glad even of that."

"Upon my word, then, Miss Maurice, I think you had better take up your abode among them altogether, you seem so fond of them."

"So I would, if you would let me," rejoined Henrietta. "What good do I do here? Who wants me? Nobody!"

And that was true enough. But she had brought it on herself by keeping out of the way when she was wanted. Now she was beginning to resent their not wanting her, but it was too late. She was only reaping what she had sown, but the harvest was not the less bitter for that.

"What a pity it is that Mr. Grey should be saddled with a delicate wife," sneered the admiral. "If he could only get rid of her, what a helpmate you would be to him."

Poor little Mrs. Grey had a spine complaint, which kept her nearly always on the sofa. The admiral had said when he first saw her—she had received the Maurice party lying down—that the woman had nothing the matter with her but idleness and affectation, and he had never chosen to alter his opinion.

Henrietta was accustomed to the sneer, and let it pass. She merely said, "If you only went with me once, papa, you would go again; and it would end with your being the most enthusiastic district-visitor in the parish."

Lizzie smothered a laugh at the idea of their father poking his nose into the Revelstoke and Wembury cottages. "He would set their clocks in order the first thing," she thought.

"I should just like to catch myself among 'em," he growled. "I've got enough to do as it is to keep order here. I don't believe you would be down to breakfast by eleven o'clock if it were not

for me. As for mamma there, she'd never get up at all."

Mrs. Maurice coughed deprecatingly.

"If I had only been there half an hour earlier," Henrietta continued, in the same dreary monotone, "I might possibly have saved a life. It may be best as it is, perhaps," she murmured to herself; "but yet I should so have liked to save him, poor little fellow!"

"What's that?" demanded the admiral.

"I thought it was a woman you went to see?" said Lizzie, getting interested.

"So it was. She has had low fever very badly and still has it hanging about her. Her baby had been ill for weeks with whooping-cough, and this morning it went into convulsions. Her husband was gone to his work; he is a day laborer. There was no cottage near, and she had neither strength to fetch water from the well to heat for a bath for the child, nor power to walk to the nearest cottage. The baby is dead. Had I been there half an hour earlier I might have been of use. I made up her fire and fetched some water, but it was too late." Henrietta made a feint of eating her dinner as if it did not matter, but the food choked her. She laid down her knife and fork, and pressed her hands together under the table.

"You couldn't help its having convulsions," was Lizzie's comforting remark.

"Just the way with the common people," said the admiral severely; "always leave every thing to the last minute. Why didn't she send before?"

"How could she? It was only through a little boy's passing by accident that she was able to send at all. The poor little creature died in my arms."

"Do be quiet, Hen!" exclaimed Lizzie, moving her chair away. "I declare you give me the horrors, talking about death in that quiet cool way. I wish you wouldn't!"

The admiral said nothing till he had finished his cheese. Then he said, with a shade of kindness in his voice:

"Take a glass of wine, Hen."

"I would rather not, thank you, papa," was the reply.

"Nonsense! Wallis, take that port to Miss Maurice." It was the admiral's own especial port, and Wallis hoped, as he poured it out, that it was a sign "that master warn't a going to worrit Miss Maurice for a while to come." "For he du worrit 'em enough to make their very vittles turn agin 'em," was Wallis's frequent remark below stairs.

"Drink that!" said the admiral peremptorily. "It will make you look less ghost-like. And don't commit the folly of walking eight miles between luncheon and dinner again."

Later in the evening, Wallis was almost scared out of his senses by seeing Miss Maurice enter his pantry while he was sorting his forks and spoons. He dropped them all with a clatter.

"Wallis," she began in a whisper, as if afraid of the admiral's hearing, "I want you to do something for me."

"Any thing I can do for you, miss, I shall be most 'appy," said Wallis, recovering himself.

"Wallis, I want to know how many glasses there are in a bottle of Madeira?"

"What can she be driving at now?" thought

Wallis. "There's ten good glasses, miss," he replied. "Years ago there used to be twelve; but now the bottles are made smaller, not but what you have to pay just the same."

"Ten glasses," meditated Henrietta. "Wallis, I want some wine for that poor woman at Revelstoke. She has had a dreadful fever, and can not get her strength back. I shall leave off taking my glass at dinner. I don't require it at all, and in a few days I shall ask you for half a bottle to take to her."

"Half a bottle!" exclaimed Wallis, aghast. "I daren't, miss; I should lose my situation. Consider, miss. You know how"—"sharp" he was going to say, but he altered it to—"particular,"—"how particular the admiral is, and he would be sure to miss it. All I can do, miss, would be to pour away a glass or two at a time into a little bottle, and that I'll do with the greatest pleasure, miss."

"But how bad the wine would get, Wallis; and I should not be able to go to Revelstoke every day, or even two or three times a week. Twice a week would be the very utmost," she said with a sigh of fatigue.

"Of course the wine wouldn't be very good, miss, but them that had never tasted any thing of the kind wouldn't see no difference. I'll look about for a boy to send once a week or so, if you wish, miss, only you must please do up the bottle as if 'twere physic, else there will be tricks played with the wine. You can't trust them boys. But, miss, what will the admiral say when he finds you are going without your wine?" Wallis had lived so many years in the family that he could venture on the liberty of such a question.

"Oh," said Henrietta, smiling, "I don't think he will find it out. But I might sit lower down, and then there would be no danger. I will change places with Miss Lizzie."

Wallis looked doubtful. "The admiral will find it out, miss; I'm morally certain he will, and he won't like it."

"I must try, at all events," said Henrietta. "Wine the woman must and shall have."

"Well, miss, I'll do what I can for you. I hope it will be all right."

"Thank you, Wallis." As she turned to go, the drawing-room bell sounded with a furious peal. Wallis rushed to answer it.

"Why don't you sound the gong for prayers?" demanded the admiral.

"I was just going to do so, sir," Wallis said.

"Going to do so? It ought to have been done five minutes ago! I suppose you will be laying the blame on the hall-clock again?" said the admiral, holding up his watch.

"Papa, I was speaking to Wallis about something I wished done," said Henrietta, who entered as the man hurriedly placed a big Bible and prayer-book before the admiral.

"Then you will be so good as to choose some other time for giving your orders. Dinner two minutes late to begin with; prayers five minutes late. There's seven minutes lost in the day—seven precious minutes! And a bad example given!"

The servants came trooping in at the voice of the gong, with faces expressive of fear and dislike, as each glanced at the master's face on passing to his or her seat; and the admiral proceeded, first turning the leaves angrily to find the

longest chapter and prayer, as a punishment both to Wallis and his daughter Henrietta for not hearing the clock strike.

Mrs. Maurice followed Henrietta to her room when the latter said "good-night," and took her bed-candle. She thought the admiral had been rather hard on her, and she wanted to say something kind to make up for it. Only she did not exactly know how to begin. She went up to the chimney-piece, and stood fingering the vases and knickknacks which stood on it, irresolutely.

"You looked very tired at dinner to-day, dear," she at length ventured to say.

Henrietta was already seated at her dressing-table, and turning over the leaves of a large "Manual of Devotion," with red margins, and a beautifully embossed ecclesiastical binding. She did not speak till she had found the place.

"I am quite well, thank you, mamma." And then she became absorbed in her reading.

"I hope, dear, you won't take such very long walks often; because you did look very tired, whether you thought so or not. And I've heard such things about people getting spine-complaints. Now there's Mrs. Grey. I have no doubt she got hers from over-walking. Naturally, you know, as a clergyman's wife she would have to walk a good deal—and I wish you wouldn't, my dear Henrietta. I declare the thought makes me quite nervous. Do take care of yourself."

Mrs. Maurice's voice rose to a plaintive treble as she spoke. She had taken it into her head that her daughter was wearing herself out secretly.

"I assure you I am perfectly well, mamma," was the reply again, cold and unsympathetic in the extreme.

Poor Mrs. Maurice sighed, and left the room without another word.

Henrietta, after completing her devotions with the aid of two or three red-margined books besides the great "Manual," retired to bed with a good conscience and an aching back.

CHAPTER XII.

REJECTED.

WE must return to Louis, whom we left seated comfortably in Sir George Vivian's carriage, on his way to the railway station.

That morning, while he and his mother were breakfasting together in the Green Room—a pretty morning-room, with its window opening into a well-stocked fernery embellished with a silver fountain, one of the late Lady Caroline's last new toys—the post arrived, bringing an unusually large budget for Louis, who, owing to his lengthened stay in Devonshire, and the numerous small duties which had devolved on him since his uncle's bereavement, was rather in arrears with his general correspondence. He looked them over eagerly, hoping to find amongst them a long thin envelope with foreign post-marks. There was none. He swallowed his disappointment as best he might, and addressed himself to the perusal of his letters—of a highly satisfactory nature, most of them. Two he handed to his mother, and, in spite of his disappointment at Estelle's silence, a gleam of satisfaction shone

out of his eyes as he watched the look of intense pleasure which beamed in her motherly face while she perused them. Both letters contained checks for no despicable amount, and in one of them was a proposal from the editor of a first-rate London magazine for his becoming a regular contributor. The letter ended with the expression of a wish for an interview.

"They appreciate you, then, at last," Mrs. Vivian said, when she had read the letters through carefully, and examined the checks. "I always said they would, but they have been a long time about it. To think of the reams and reams of paper you have filled, and been paid a mere trifle for; and sometimes the wretches would actually send it back—"

"And doubtless the wretches were quite right, mother," said Louis, with a good-humored laugh, as he looked over the remainder of his letters.

Mrs. Vivian continued:

"And sometimes they would positively accept what you sent, and never pay you! That, in my opinion, was a most dishonest proceeding, and I—"

"Well, mother dear, that won't happen again."

"I should hope not!" retorted Mrs. Vivian, angrily.

"After all, mother, I have been no worse served than many a better man. How many have died, waiting for the glimmer of success which never came to them! That will not be my case, mother; at least, so it would seem at present."

"Yes," and then she added, sadly: "I wish you may not overwork yourself, though. That is your danger. Oh, my boy, I wish you had a more robust constitution for that wearing London life."

"A settled income gives a fellow a quiet mind, and that may stand instead of the constitution," said Louis. He disliked his mother's thinking of his health so constantly.

"Yes; and yet," added the widow, afraid to be too glad at her son's success, "we ought to pray that this gleam of prosperity may not prove a snare. There is a great blessing in a precarious income if we could but receive it rightly," she concluded with a sigh.

"It's a blessing I'm uncommonly glad to exchange," laughed Louis. "I've had enough of it, and I prefer the snare of certainty. And really, don't you think, mother, that these nice checks deserve a new purse?" he said, gathering them up.

The purse he took from his pocket was as dingy as a purse could be.

"Let me burn that disreputable-looking thing," said his mother. "I've got another just finished, that will do exactly for you."

Louis looked at it for a moment. "Poor worn-out old thing!" he said. "No, mother, you may give me the new one, but I won't have this burnt."

For, strangely enough, the purse reminded him of Estelle. It was an old-fashioned knitted thing which his mother had given him just before his tour in the Pyrenees two years ago. The silk had given way one day—how well he remembered it—a broiling day at Canterets; and Estelle, with her needle and thread, had deftly remedied the gap, with a low laugh at the great helpless masculine fingers, good for nought, she said sau-

cily, but to spoil good pens and paper, and pare her best drawing-pencils to shavings.

How he remembered it! They were sitting in a meadow, a little Alp high above the leaping Gave. With elbows cushioned on a thick tangle of heart's-ease and veronica, they watched the stream as it sped downward amid granite rocks and boulders, as if in haste to reach the valley and be at rest. The breeze came down from the gorge above laden with the scent of pine and box. Down nearest the water the dragon-flies kept up their mazy dance; overhead the butterflies skimmed along—peacocks, great swallow-tails, emperors, in endless procession. The herbage swarmed with great green grasshoppers, which alighted without ceremony on their heads and arms, and hopped off quicker than thought when they tried to catch them. And then they bent their heads down close to the grass, and wondered at the beautiful Lilliputian insect-world which stood thus revealed to them. Flies, no bigger than midges, streaked green, and red, and yellow; beetles the size of a pin's head, like gems for brilliancy; nondescript insects, of which they could not tell which end was head and which tail; microscopic spiders, speckled, mottled, and barred—building, fighting, nursing their broods; their whole round of existence comprised within two tiny branches of gentianella. And Mathurine in her high goffered cap sat near, perched on a stone, knitting furiously, and shaking her skirts in disgust at the grasshoppers; wishing she were back in her native Toulouse, and keeping up an unceasing grumble at mademoiselle's strange fancy of sitting in the grass, "in the middle of all those jumping beasts!"

That was the picture the old purse conjured up.

If Mrs. Vivian had not been sitting there, Louis would have kissed it. But as it was, he only gave it a tight squeeze, as if it had been a hand, and replaced it in his pocket.

Just then the butler entered, bringing a letter for Louis from his uncle.

"It was sent up with Sir George's letters by mistake, sir. And Sir George would like to see you this morning, sir, as soon as is quite convenient to you."

Louis glanced at the letter. His heart gave one bound, and then stood still.

It was a thin envelope, with the orange-colored effigy of his majesty Napoleon III. in the right-hand corner.

Here was his fate, signed, sealed, and delivered, on a glittering salver, engraved with the Vivian arms, by the hand of the Vivian butler, who, by-the-by, looked quite as much a clergyman as any vicar or rector in the diocese of Exeter.

Louis took it, and sat a while staring at it.

"Why don't you open it!" asked Mrs. Vivian, stretching her neck to get a sight of the postmarks. "Perhaps it's another money-letter."

"I think not," said he quietly, putting it into the same pocket with his worn-out purse.

It always happens that when people want to be alone they are overwhelmed with company. Louis wanted five minutes' solitude; wherefore Mrs. Vivian, instead of retiring to her room for her usual after-breakfast dose of Law's "Serious Call," asked him to take a turn with her on the terrace; which turn was multiplied fourfold before she entered the house again. Then the house-

keeper, having some small money-trouble of her own, came to lay it before him, and he was fain to give her a half-hour. Then Sir George again sent to beg him to step up to his room. Sir George had not come down stairs since the funeral. Grief had aged him wonderfully. His very voice was changed. He pointed to a chair, and inquired after Mrs. Vivian. He was always scrupulously polite to his sister-in-law and nephew; and if cordiality was wanting, Louis did not care, neither did his mother. They knew they were poor relations, and accepted the fact with perfect equanimity.

"I want you to do something for me, Louis," said Sir George presently. "I want you to go to London for me. You see, I am not fit to move. I don't feel fit for any thing." There he paused.

"I should have to go on my own account," said Louis, "in a few days at the farthest; if it is any thing particular you want done, I may as well go at once."

"Thank you. Yes. I should like it set about at once, and then perhaps it will weigh less on my mind. It's the monument I allude to. I want you to choose some designs; those you select can be sent down to me. There's an Italian, Muroni by name, who will suit my ideas best, I think. She and I happened to see some monumental designs of his some years ago, and I remember she said—" He left the sentence unfinished. "But I haven't an idea where the man lives," he said, presently.

"I can soon find out that," said Louis. He longed to say something more, but his shyness kept him dumb. He did not know, either, whether his uncle might not resent any expression of sympathy. So he merely said:

"I'll go to-day. Shall I?"

"Thank you," said Sir George, giving him his hand, which Louis took for a sign that he wished to close the interview.

Now it did occur to the baronet that he might not inaptly give his nephew a note to cover his travelling expenses. But he thought better of it. Not that he was a stingy man, but because, as he said to himself, the fellow was so confoundedly proud.

"The only time I wanted to make him a present since his college days, he drew himself up with such an 'ancient Roman' air, and declined with such curtness, that I swore I'd never offer him a farthing again—and I won't," said Sir George.

At last, in the friendly solitude of the fir-plantation, Louis opened his foreign letter.

In a few scarcely courteous lines Mrs. Russell declined his proposal to her daughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOUIS VIVIAN TRIES AGAIN.

TOTALLY unabashed by the presence of the Vivian Court footman, Louis, on reaching the station, took a second-class ticket to London; and by that one act degraded himself irreparably in the estimation of this tall and splendid functionary, who failed not, while supper was going on, to give his private sentiments respecting "a fellow who called himself a Vivian, and didn't know what was doo to himself, much less to Sir George,

the 'ead of the fam'ly." The housekeeper went so far as to opine that Mr. Vivian's conduct implied a lurking disrespect to the memory of her ladyship. The butler, a prudent man, suspended his judgment; and then the discussion branched off into an inquiry into the probable length of Mrs. Vivian's stay at the Court.

On this point the lady's-maid was of opinion that the baronet's sister-in-law ought to be packing up her trunks.

"She's been here going on a month, and when my lady, poor dear, was alive, she never staid more than a week at the longest: and quite long enough too," Miss Pincot said with a toss. "I know how my lady felt, poor dear; she couldn't bear the sight of her. Many's the time she's said to me, 'Pincot,' says she, 'Oh, Pincot, I shall be so glad when this week's over.' And I don't call it delicate of Mrs. Vivian to keep staying on so."

"She may have reasons, you know," said the housekeeper.

"Sir George treats her as if she was a fixture, that's all I know," observed the butler.

"La! you don't say it!" remarked the housekeeper.

"Well, I shan't be here to fasten her gowns, that's all," said the lady's-maid. "Any body that likes may hook 'em up for me."

Mrs. Vivian, all unconscious of the committee of inquiry below stairs, quietly went through her daily task of knitting and reading, seated in the blue drawing-room, the smallest and cosiest of the suite. She would have liked to return to her humble lodgings at Dorking, but Sir George had begged her to stay, and she had acceded to his request, less from a wish to please him than from an undefined idea that her thwarting him might in some way damage her son's interests.

Louis found so much to do on arriving in London that he had no leisure to contrast the dinginess of his rooms in Hurst Street, Bloomsbury, with the bright, sunny luxuriance of Vivian Court. Yet the difference weighed him down without his being conscious of it. Not so much the mere difference between large rooms and gilded furniture, and small rooms with the musty worn-out furniture consecrated to the use of London people with limited incomes, as the actual difference of atmosphere—the number of cubic feet of pure breathing-air;—and this, whether a man cares to think about it or whether he does not, does make a difference, and a considerable one in the long-run.

But to Louis Vivian's own consciousness, the only reason for depression was Mrs. Russell's curt reply. To overcome this depression he addressed himself to write to Estelle again. He had thought over what he should write very carefully on his way up to London. Had he been certain of his appeal meeting Estelle's eye alone, he would have poured forth his whole soul without stint or reserve. For in the depths of his heart he had the firmest faith in the completeness of her love for him; so firm, that the possibility of her becoming tired of long waiting had never troubled him. He bowed his head, as in prayer, when he thought of Estelle as his wife—thought of himself as participating with her in the most ancient and the holiest of God's ordinances. But, if it were willed that they should remain apart—even for a lifetime—what then? They would carry their love to Heaven, and begin their union in eternity.

So he thought. Something in this strain he

tried to write, but was hindered by the possibility that Estelle's mother, and not Estelle herself, might open his letter. Bearing this in mind, then, he endeavored to write in measured style, and after much labor and correction, imagined he had produced a very calm, temperate letter—a letter, that is, which Mamma Russell might read without anger.

"The very best thing I could have written," he said, as he dropped the letter into the box.

And no sooner had it slipped out of his reach than he would have given worlds to possess it again.

What would Estelle think of his measured style? Would she not stigmatize it as cold and hard? He walked up and down the pavement in front of the branch post-office, asking himself this question, till at last people began to stop and stare. This brought him to his senses.

"The thing is out of my hands," he thought. "So be it. If I am to be rejected, let it at any rate be at her hands, not at her proud mother's."

He read Mrs. Russell's letter once more before burning it. It was written in a beautifully clear, flowing hand; there were no blots nor scratches nor dashes, nor signs of hurry about it. You would have said that Mrs. Russell had spent much time and pains over that letter: that she had written it, very likely, from a rough copy. No such thing. She would have written an order to her shoemaker in precisely the same hand; only the shoemaker would not have been favored with fine note-paper, scented with Stephanotis bouquet, such as she had taken to write to Louis Vivian.

"Poor child!" he thought, "her mother won't let her even say 'No' for herself. Not that she would, either. No; if they will only let her alone I believe she loves me enough to wait till I can give her a comfortable home. Dear, simple-minded little soul! What a pleasure it was to make her laugh, and what an unsophisticated, joyous, child-like laugh it was! I should like to hear it again."

"And hear it again I will!" he exclaimed, as he lit the gas, and held Mrs. Russell's letter to it. "Hear it again I will, in spite of that stern mother of hers."

"I can not understand that woman," he cogitated, as he watched the flame take possession of the Stephanotis-scented paper. "She used to be so kind and cordial, and talk so much about the friendship that existed between my father and her husband when they were both young men; and now she writes to me as a woman might to a man who had forgotten himself in some way or other. Adamantine pen, and words to match. Fine, and cold, and cruel."

You see, Louis was totally ignorant of the Russell family affairs. Sir George could have told him a great deal, had he but been asked. He could have given a full, true, and particular account of all Estelle's ancestry, paternal, maternal, and collateral; besides the great fact of the thirty thousand pounds' legacy, left by an aunt of Mrs. Russell's to accumulate for the grand-niece, out of spite at her niece's marrying Captain Russell, who had once presumed to laugh at her eccentricities. If Louis had been more inquisitive, he might have learnt all this, and understood of what an enormous piece of presumption he had been guilty when he dared think of the possibility of

an engagement between himself and Estelle Russell.

But he had never thought of any thing, had never seen any thing, except Estelle's beauty and goodness, and their mutual love. Her ancestors! They might have been beggars for aught he cared; he loved her, not her ancestors. And Mrs. Russell's present haughtiness, as he compared it with her past courtesy, was simply incomprehensible to him.

But there was something else for Louis to think about besides Mrs. Russell's changed behavior. There were papers to look over, proof-sheets to correct, and an essay to write for the magazine to which he had become a contributor. Besides this, he had to write to his mother nearly every day—no waste of time this to him, knowing as he did the pleasure which his letters were to her. Then he had to find out the sculptor Muroi, and give him Sir George's order. Whereupon ensued a long and tiresome correspondence, and much running to and fro on Louis's part between Bloomsbury and Pimlico. This he might perhaps have chafed at, had not he seen, or fancied, a resemblance to Estelle in one of the many ideal busts in Muroi's studio. He inquired the price of the bust, and made a note of it in his pocket-book, saying to himself, "In a year and a half, perhaps, if I get as much work to do as I have now, I may make a present of it to myself." And then he smiled to think of the strange effect the white marble would have amid the chaos of books in his room.

"Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," was the line of daily conduct which Louis strove to follow—which he had followed sometimes, even in his boyhood, to his own hurt: forgetting that body is but servant to spirit, and, like any other servant, wants rest at certain intervals. He had gone on working at his essay for many days without relaxation, and it was nearly finished. Amidst the chaos of books he had made himself a path, wherein he paced to and from his desk, pen in hand, arranging in their proper order the thoughts that crowded on him. He had written on, taking no heed of time, till suddenly one evening his lamp went out. This sudden interruption broke the current of his ideas, and it all at once occurred to him that it was getting late, and that he had forgotten his dinner. He re-lit the lamp, and returned to his desk. As he did so the clock struck midnight. He looked at his watch, wound it up mechanically, and took up his pen to finish the incomplete sentence.

Suddenly a cry broke into the quiet room; a sound of wild passionate weeping.

Louis started, dropped his pen, and ran to the door, thinking to find some one outside. There was no one; the silence was only broken by the chime dying away from a distant church steeple.

Thinking that some one might be lurking on the stairs, he took the lamp and searched. But the whole house was still; there was nothing living on the staircase except a mouse, which scudded away to its hole at the sound of his stealthy tread.

"I must certainly have been dreaming," he thought, as he returned to his room. "And yet I felt sure I heard a woman's voice. Perhaps I had better strike work for to-night."

So saying, he made up his fire, stretched him-

self on the rug, and gave himself up to castle-building.

I am bound to admit that Louis had one extravagance, and that it consisted in keeping up a large fire at most unorthodox seasons of the year. Mrs. Vivian's thrifty soul would have been vexed had she seen the blaze, fit for Christmas-tide, before which Louis lay basking in full content.

Naturally enough he began thinking of Estelle, and wondering whether her mother had kept his letter from her. He had the habit which is sooner or later acquired by people who lead solitary lives, of soliloquizing aloud: and his present soliloquy ran thus:

"I wonder what will come of it this time! Will she write, or will that dreadful mother favor me again with a sheet of that sickly-scented note-paper? By Jove! if my present luck continues, I may be able to run down to the Pyrenees this autumn. And won't that be jolly?" he said, addressing the fire, as he gave it a friendly poke.

"I wonder what she'll do when she sees me, pretty darling! Will she make one of those tremendous French courtesies? If the stern mater happens to be out of the way, she will give me her pretty hand to shake. But the mater won't be out of the way, unless Providence specially interposes in my behalf. I shall be received with one of those tremendous courtesies, just as if I were a Frenchman, and madame will look on with that charming smile I've seen her wear when every thing and every body was not to her taste. But a fellow must live in hope, you know," he continued, giving his friend the fire another vigorous poke.

"To hope, to *dare* hope to see her, touch her hand, hear her speak, seems too much! Can it be? Will it be? . . . Oh, my Estelle, my beautiful lady! to touch even the hem of your robe . . ."

Again that cry, filling the room. A burst of wild weeping, mingled with half-inarticulate words:

"Louis! Louis! Louis! . . . come . . . take me away!"

It was Estelle's voice.

Louis started up and flung the door open, crying, "Estelle! Estelle! Child, where are you?"

Only the echo of his own voice came back. The stairs were silent and empty as before. He lingered a moment, and then, closing the door with an irrepressible shudder, turned back instinctively to the fire.

But the empty darkness outside jarred horribly on his excited nerves; the fire was no longer a companion.

Empty! Was it empty? There are seasons when the bravest of us fall a prey to the wildest superstition.

"Was Estelle dead?" he asked himself, shaking with terror. Was it her spirit that called on him thus?

"Dead!" he repeated over and over to himself. Dead? No. Could Heaven be so unjust, so cruel, as to take from him that best part of himself—that other half of his soul—divided from him though it were by all the broad plains of France? What had been his sin that he should be tortured so? His whole soul rose up in anger against such an envious decree; he breathed words of defiance such as need not be set down here.

But that mood did not last long.

"I am a fool," he said presently. "I exhaust my brain with overwork; I fancy all sorts of nonsense, and then I take Providence to task. I'll go to bed, and sleep off this rubbish."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN OLD FRIEND.

EARLY the next morning Louis was at his desk again. He had risen, hoping to put the finishing touches to his essay: to his dismay he found his mind totally incapable of exertion. All day long did he endeavor, pacing restlessly up and down his room, to bring his mind to bear upon the subject in hand; but the overtaxed brain refused to work: a dull stupor had taken possession of him. Towards evening, scarcely knowing why or how he went, he turned his steps to the great thoroughfare leading into the City. Heretofore, a walk down the Strand had been a never-failing remedy for the nervous depression which he, whenever he thought enough about it to give it a name, was used to stigmatize as "a fit of the dumps." But now he was jaded past amusement. And he could not think of Estelle with comfort. The demon hypochondria had him in its grip, and would not be exorcised by the sweet sound of her name. As the evening closed in, the impression of the night before returned to him. He marked the date in his pocket-book. As he wrote it, his eye fell on the top of the page, on which was noted the sculptor Muron's address, and the price of the marble bust called "Tristezza," in which he had seen such a strange likeness to Estelle. He made up his mind to have the bust, at the cost of no matter what privation, for the thought would press upon him that she was dead, and that the marble face and the purse she had mended were the only memorials he would ever have of her.

He walked along, muttering to himself, "Dead, dead, dead." His face was white and haggard, and he stared blankly as he went. Women looked pityingly at him as they passed onward, and a young work-girl said to her companion, "There's one has lost his sweetheart."

"I have been knocked up before," he thought at last, "but I was never so bad as this. I should not dare cross a bridge to-night." And he turned his back on the river. "This state of things must be put an end to, and the sooner the better. I'll spend a guinea on that fellow in Vaughan Street whom I consulted two years ago. He'll set me to rights again, I dare say."

Half an hour's walking brought him to Vaughan Street. At his knock the door was opened quickly by a boy in buttons.

"Is Dr.—" Louis began, and then stopped short. He had completely forgotten the physician's name.

"Is your master at home?" he asked.

He would be home presently, the boy replied. He was a mealy-faced urchin, and grinned as he spoke, as if master's coming home was rather a pleasant prospect than otherwise.

Louis said he would wait; and the boy, after showing him into a dimly-lit study, retired to the hall and resumed the game of marbles which his entry had interrupted.

Louis sat wearily down in an arm-chair and looked about him. He did not remember the room. As far as could be seen by the dim light, it was comfortable in the extreme. The draperies were of some warm hue between maroon and crimson; there were plenty of books lying about; there was a mounted microscope on the table, a galvanic battery on a table in the corner, and in another two strange-looking machines.

"I remember," thought Louis, "that there was a big stain of ink on the carpet; it was a front room, and this is at the back. And the doctor kept me waiting an hour. I hope he won't this time."

Presently the front door opened and slammed, and a deep, cheery voice in the hall called out:

"Send up dinner, sharp. I've an appointment at half-past eight."

The boy in buttons replied. Then the voice again:

"Somebody for me, eh? Then don't send dinner up till I ring."

The study door opened, and the physician entered with a brisk elastic step.

"I trust you have not waited long. What can I do for you?" he turned up the gas as he spoke.

"No, I haven't been waiting long."

"Why, Vivian!" and the doctor burst into a rollicking laugh, and appeared altogether hugely tickled.

"Why, Vandeleur!" said Louis in amazement.

"I thought it was a patient!" and Dr. Vandeleur laughed again in a most unprofessional manner.

"I certainly did come here to consult a medical man," said Louis, "but I never expected to see you. I came to see a Dr.—; I can not remember the man's name," he exclaimed with a gesture of impatience. "All I know is that I consulted him two years ago, and that he lived here."

"Come and have some dinner with me," said Dr. Vandeleur, with his hand on the bell, "and you can go and search for your medical man afterwards—when you have remembered his name."

"How odd that I should stumble upon you."

"Name's on the door, at any rate."

"It was too dark to see that."

"Too dark, nonsense!—nearsightedness—absence of mind. Bad habit. Always have your wits about you. Next time you'll stumble into an enemy's house instead of a friend's."

"Dinner's up, sir," said the boy in buttons.

"Come along, old fellow," said the doctor.

"I'm hungry after my day's work, I can tell you. Hope you can dine off roast mutton."

"I should think so," said Louis.

After helping his guest, the doctor employed himself for some time in appeasing his own hunger. He looked up suddenly.

"Not eating! Mutton overdone? Underdone? What's the matter with it, man?"

"Nothing. It's excellent mutton, but I'm rather off my feed," said Louis.

"Should say you must be, to quarrel with such a joint as this," said the doctor, helping himself to another huge slice, and relapsing into silence.

"Highly nervous," was the physician's soliloquy. "Tell that by the first sound of his voice. Been overworking himself. Won't last long at the pace he's going. Got the seeds of consumption in him. Lots of brain and no stamina. Poor fellow! Wants somebody to take care of him."

"Now I think of it," he said aloud, "we have never met since you gave your call-supper. How one does lose sight of one's friends in London!"

"I remember," said Louis, "you were in some doubt then as to your future movements."

"Yes, I was very near giving up what practice I had, and going off to the Continent with a rich, gouty old fellow, who had an awful temper. I'm glad I didn't. I'm peppery myself, and I know I should have done something rash—assaulted him, or poisoned him, perhaps. I never could stand much chaff, you know. Well, the long and short of it was, that I determined to stick where I was. Fortune, being a woman, must come round if I held my ground long enough. Fortune did come round, after a good deal of coaxing; and here I am."

"And very comfortable you appear to be," said Louis, looking round. "You'll be setting up your carriage before long."

"Next year, I dare say," said the doctor, confidently.

"And then a wife, I suppose. Or will the wife come first?"

"Neither first nor last, if I know it," growled the doctor. "Women are a set of—of—"

"Take your time," said Louis, who remembered his friend's heretical opinions respecting women, and had often had a good laugh over them, years before. "Take a good strong epithet, Vandeleur, and stick to it."

"A set of confounded, audacious humbugs!"

"As cynical as ever," laughed Louis. "I know very little about women, but—"

"The less you know of them the better," growled the doctor. "Have some pudding?"

"None, thank you."

"Come here, you scamp." This was addressed to the boy in buttons, who approached, grinning broadly.

"Now look here," said the doctor, proceeding to fill a plate with pudding, "this is yours. Clear away, and then eat up what's on this plate. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy with alacrity.

"When first I had that boy," said Doctor Vandeleur, after the door had closed upon him, "the scamp was always priggish at the sweet things. It was something awful. He'd clear the dishes, and then swear to the housekeeper that I had consumed the whole of their contents. I didn't care much for the fellow's greediness, but his mendacity wasn't to be borne. Housekeeper wanted him discharged, of course. Wasn't going to do any thing of the kind. Cured him instead. How d'ye think I did it?" asked the doctor, turning a merry, mischievous pair of eyes on Louis.

"Oh, I don't know. Threatened him with the police, or a flogging, perhaps."

"Nothing of the kind," said the doctor. "Do you smoke?"

"I don't care about it."

"Mind my smoking, eh? Here goes then."

Well," he continued, after lighting his meerschau, "I medicated the pudding while the fellow was out of the room. The dish, as usual, arrived in the lower regions empty. I had given the housekeeper a hint, so she held her tongue. Half an hour later I was sent for in a great hurry. Found the patient on the kitchen floor, kicking, rolling, groaning, and confessing his misdeeds in the most candid and edifying manner. Thought he was going to die, and promised no end if I would cure him this once.

"Well, you know, the craving for sweets is a propensity that I remembered having myself at his age, to a most inordinate degree. What raids I used to make on my mother's jams! And how I used to get licked afterwards! I felt a touch of likeness to the poor mealy-faced wretch. Also, I reflected that if I discharged him, the next boy might possibly not confine himself to stealing pudding, but help himself to spoons besides. I got him well by slow degrees; took three days over it, I believe; and then I made a solemn compact with him to the effect, that whenever there was pudding he should have a plateful on condition that the dish remained untouched on its way to the kitchen. I've found the plan answer excellently."

"While talking, the doctor had watched his friend. Now he puffed on in silence.

"Wants rousing," he said to himself. "Got something or other on his mind. Lip trembles and quivers. Eye too bright. Good hand, though. Immense deal of power in that hand. Hopeful sign, that. I wouldn't give him a twelvemonth without that hand. As it is, under very favorable circumstances he may get through three or four years. Pity. Fine fellow. Good fellow. Better if he weren't so confoundedly shy."

"I've got quite attached to that boy," he said aloud, after a long pull at the meerschau. "One must make a pet of something. What is yours?"

Louis laughed. "There is a mangy cat at my lodgings, which pays me a visit sometimes. I kept a goldfinch once, but on returning from a visit to my mother at Dorking I found the poor little brute dead at the bottom of its cage. They had forgotten to give it water. Of course I renounced caged pets from that moment, and I haven't taken to any others, except flowers, and I don't think the atmosphere of Hurst Street agrees particularly well with them."

"And when are you going to set up your carriage, old fellow?" asked the doctor kindly.

"The sound of my chariot-wheels has not yet struck upon mine ear," said Louis; "but it will by-and-by—if I can wait long enough," he added hastily. "If—that is the only rub."

"Ah!" and then the doctor puffed away again.

And Louis lay back in his arm-chair, quite content at sitting opposite a fellow-creature instead of having only his own thoughts and his fire for company.

"This is very pleasant," he said, at length, taking out his watch, as Dr. Vandeleur laid down his meerschau; "but you have an appointment, and I must not detain you."

"Let it wait; it's not professional. One doesn't meet an old friend every night."

"No, indeed," said Louis, warmly. And then, while Dr. Vandeleur smoked on with half-shut eyes, he told him that he was out of health, and

wanted setting to rights—which the doctor knew already.

"The man you consulted here two years ago sent you abroad, you say? How long did you stay, and where did you go?"

"I went to the Pyrenees for three months," Louis answered; "but—"

"Well, old fellow, I'll send you there again, for six months instead of three."

"But that is totally out of the question," Louis interrupted, irritably. "Go abroad now! Why, I should ruin every prospect I have. If it were autumn instead of spring, I might manage a few weeks' run—God knows how gladly I would go—but now—I can't do it, Vandeleur, and there's an end of it. You must prescribe something else; something that will not prevent my working on now, for work I must, and will. And yet—" And then he rapidly told of his recent engagement as contributor to the—Magazine, of the unfinished essay, into which he had thrown heart and soul.

"I had been going on swimmingly with it until last night, and now—I give you my word, Vandeleur, your boy in buttons is as capable of finishing it as I am. It only wants touching up, but my brain has so completely struck work that—"

"Ah! Burning too much of the midnight oil, eh?"

"I dare say. What is a fellow to do?"

"All work and no play.—Just like you. Old story. Serve you right. Plenty of brains, but no common sense. Well; go on!" said Dr. Vandeleur again; "you haven't finished yet, old fellow."

Louis hesitated a moment. Should he tell the doctor of the terrible cry which had resounded in his ear the night before? One look at the kindly face opposite decided him. "You will write me down an ass," he began.

"Doubtless," quoth Dr. Vandeleur. "Well?"

And Louis, with a desperate plunge, told him of his terror at hearing that cry and recognizing the sound of the beloved voice. The physician understood him almost without his speaking. A few half-broken sentences, the quiver of the mouth, the words, "I thought it was the voice of a person that I knew," told Dr. Vandeleur nearly all that he desired to know.

"One word, Vivian," he said; "is the person alive?"

"As far as I know," Louis replied. "You'll laugh at me, old fellow; but all this has impressed me as strongly as if it was real—which of course it isn't—and I can not shake myself free of it. I have a horror of going home to-night."

"I am not going to laugh," said Dr. Vandeleur, "and you are not going from this house of mine to-night if I know it. No thanks," he continued, as Louis would have spoken. "It's simply part of my prescription. A bed at a friend's house, to begin with; secondly, country air."

"I've just come from the country," Louis observed.

"Much good the country will do you if you work as hard there as you do here. Now, look here. I forbid you even to look at the outside of a book, or to touch pen, ink, or paper—"

"Rubbish!" cried Louis. "How is the essay to be finished if I don't?"

"Let the essay wait. Give your brain per-

fect rest for a month. It won't be before it wants it."

"That's all very fine, my dear fellow, but an editor won't understand that line of argument."

"Very well. Then you'll have softening of the brain."

Louis sat silent and agast.

"I would say, rest for three months, but I see it would be but casting pearls before swine to give you such advice as that, situated as you are. However, a month I insist upon; and after that, don't do more than you can possibly help for some time to come. Your brain is just wearing out your body, Vivian."

"I give in," said Louis, impressed by the physician's grave tone. "I'll go down to Vivian Court to-morrow. My mother is there and so—"

"Vivian Court. Down in Devonshire, eh?"

"My uncle's place," said Louis. And then he told Dr. Vandeleur of the three deaths which had occurred there in such quick succession.

"By Jove, then, Vivian, you are the heir!"

"My uncle will live for the next twenty years," said Louis. "He's awfully cut up now, but he's safe to marry again."

And then he changed the subject, and asked the doctor to show him his microscope. Of all things, that fact of his heirship jarred most on him in the present state of his mind. For, as his mother insisted, it was a plain fact, and there was no denying it. And every body who happened to know that Sir George was his uncle would think, and say, perhaps, "What luck for Vivian!" And Louis was so sensitive and so proud—never more so than when, as now, unhinged from overwork—that nothing would have pleased him better than to be able to declare, to all who mentioned the subject, that his uncle had actually married again. However, that, thought he, like other things, would come, if he waited long enough. And both he and Dr. Vandeleur quickly forgot Sir George and his affairs over the microscope. But not the microscope, nor the doctor's pleasant chat, as he took one object after another out of his object-box, could banish from Louis's mind, as the evening wore on, the remembrance of that unearthly cry.

Dr. Vandeleur saw him looking at the time-piece, and divined his thought. "Humph!" he said to himself, "that fellow will go melancholy mad if he isn't taken in hand properly."

But he said aloud, "Are you thinking of the evening post? I'll send round early to-morrow morning, or to-night, if you are expecting any letters of importance."

To-morrow morning would do, Louis said.

And on the morning the mealy-faced boy appeared, with the usual grin upon his face, and with two letters for Louis; one from Sir George and one from Mrs. Vivian.

Mrs. Vivian wrote that the baronet was in better spirits, had come down stairs to dinner twice, and had walked a great deal in the garden. He had also inquired when Louis was likely to be down again. "And I think," wrote Mrs. Vivian, in conclusion, "that, considering all things, it would be very foolish of you to stay away longer than you find absolutely necessary."

"So far, so good," thought Louis, as he folded up the letter.

Sir George's epistle related solely to the busi-

ness of the monument. Muroi was to proceed immediately to Vivian Court, where he would find a workman ready for him. Money was inclosed for his expenses. Any assistant or assistants he needed he could bring with him. In a postscript Sir George bethought himself of thanking his nephew for the trouble he had taken, and hoped civilly he might soon find it convenient to make some further stay at the Court.

On his way to Muroi, Louis stopped at Hurst Street to get his bag, into which he could not forbear putting the unfinished manuscript.

"I shall take my enforced holiday with a better grace," he thought, "if I know the thing is within my reach to look over, if I feel up to it."

Muroi's preparations were not lengthy. He ran hither and thither, and gave directions by word and sign to his foreman, as he wrapped up a few tools and stuffed them into a bag along with his best and only suit. Louis, finding that he had not the slightest idea to which station he ought to go in order to reach Devonshire, good-naturedly proposed their going together; and off they set, accompanied by a youth bearing a large sack of modelling clay. It was Louis, again, who got the tickets; and he had employment enough, and no small amusement, in preventing Muroi and his boy from rushing off to every train which set out whilst they were waiting for the Devonshire mail. Once fairly launched, Muroi relapsed into silence and gravity, crossing himself and muttering a prayer whenever the train shot through a tunnel. It was getting dusk as they reached the terminus, and the rain was pouring as it only pours in Devonshire. As Louis was making his way through the crowd he stumbled over one of the Vivian Court footmen, the same splendid creature whose feelings had received such a severe shock at the sight of a Vivian taking his seat in a second-class carriage. Louis concluded the footman had been sent with the carriage for Muroi, and wondered at its being so; for Sir George was as chary of exposing his upper servants to the weather as if they had been horses, and that is saying a great deal. At the utmost, the old brougham, driven by one of the grooms, was all that need be expected on such a pouring night as this, even by a visitor of more consequence than the little Italian sculptor. This passed through his mind as he was turning to look after his companions, who were gesticulating wildly before a heap of luggage, at the farthest end of which was the bag of modelling clay. As he was crossing over to them, the tall footman arrested his progress:

"Mrs. Vivian ordered the carriage, though she did not know exactly by what train you might come, sir."

Mrs. Vivian order the carriage? Then Vivian Court was in a state of revolution, and the world was coming to an end, thought Louis.

"Shall I take your bag, sir?" Mrs. Vivian thought you would take a special."

"A special! What is the matter? Is Mrs. Vivian ill?" cried Louis.

"Mrs. Vivian is as well as can be expected, sir; but very anxious about your coming. The carriage is just outside, sir."

"This way!" cried an officious porter. "Any luggage, sir? Only this bag, sir? All right! Out of the way, there! Bring up Sir Louis Vivian's carriage!"

"Good God!" Louis gasped. Every thing reeled around him, and he stretched out his hand to grasp at something.

The footman was ready with his arm. "Did you not get the telegrams, sir? Mrs. Vivian sent two. It was very sudden, sir."

Sir George Vivian, the man whom Louis had thought good for twenty years, had died that morning of disease of the heart.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH THERE IS A GREAT COMMOTION.

SPRING was going fast; the acacia-trees in the promenades were looking their loveliest. The flower-fair was over, and Estelle's wedding-day was drawing nigh. How terribly fast the time flew! thought Estelle, as she watched her rose-trees bursting daily into fuller bloom.

How terribly slow the days went! was Raymond's thought, during his daily rides from Toulouse to Château Montaignu, where he now spent the greater part of his time in superintending the decoration of the rooms on the upper story, which for nine months in the year were to be the abode of himself and his wife. Many a battle-royal had there been fought between him and Madame de Montaignu over those decorations. Madame objected to the scale of splendor on which the upholsterer's proceedings were based. Raymond, on his side, insisted that nothing was half good enough for the future comtesse.

"Even if she does bring a good dowry, thou need'st not to ruin thyself," madame would say, feeling keenly how shabby her own suite of rooms on the ground-floor would look compared to her daughter-in-law's. Her only comfort in looking at the draperies, rose-color, sky-blue, and canary, of the rooms up stairs, was that Raymond would repeat of his bargain before the year was out.

While this was going on, Mrs. Russell, on her side, was not one whit behind hand. She had resolved that her daughter's outfit should surpass that of all countesses of Montaignu, past, present, or future. To this end she had invoked the aid of the most experienced artists in Toulouse, who, directed by a very great Parisian authority in the matter of wedding outfits, bid fair to realize her wishes to the utmost.

Neither were the lawyers idle. Long and grave were the conferences held by Mrs. Russell with her man of business. Not an article of the marriage contract would she consent to, until the whole of the code relating to marriage and dowry had been made clear to her. Her aptitude for business matters astonished Madame de Montaignu's notary.

The person most concerned in these preparations was the least consulted. What should that child know about such things? would either of the mothers have asked, had any one ventured to express surprise at Estelle's silence in the family conclave. Monsieur Raymond came backward and forward, and reported progress in the furnishing of the rooms at the château to his future mother-in-law, who listened, and made what suggestions she pleased, while Estelle sat by, automaton-like, only speaking when spoken to. Her own room, with its books, and flowers, and ornaments, had become hateful to her. Instead

of being, as heretofore, a sweet *sanctum* where she could sit half the day and dream of Louis Vivian, it was the scene of daily discussions on millinery and dress between her mother and the workpeople, not to speak of Lisette and Mathurine, who enjoyed the fuss excessively, and criticised and admired with all the freedom of two attached servants. Long before there was a likelihood of such discussions being set at rest, Estelle had become so utterly weary of them that she had taken up the habit of leaving the house, and staying for hours together in the church of the Dalbade. To get to it she only had to cross the quadrangle and go down a narrow passage which communicated with the Lady chapel. The darkness and silence of the deep nave were welcome and soothing; once there, she felt as if she had drifted away into a haven of rest from the noise and frivolity of the outer world. She used to sit in a corner, and wonder sometimes why it was she felt so miserable, when she was doing all that lay in her power to make her mother happy. She had been very miserable, she had thought, during the time when she was in opposition to her mother. But now, although she was no longer lectured on her obstinacy, and wickedness, and undutifulness — although she was caressed and petted more than she had ever been in her life, she felt that her misery was of such a nature, that the former misery, compared to it, was happiness itself.

She would have been thankful if that old misery could have come back; for although even the remembrance of her mother's coldness and anger made her tremble, yet while that time had lasted she had not had to feel that Louis had given her up.

She would kneel sometimes, and try to pray that she might be a little less miserable. Often-er still, she would kneel and have no thought at all of prayer, but only wish uselessly that she might stay where she was and be quiet forever. Lisette, who used to come and fetch her when her absence seemed likely to surprise Mrs. Russell, or when Monsieur Raymond would appear at unexpected hours, used to wonder at seeing her young mistress so absorbed and motionless. Marriage, looking at it from one point of view, was undoubtedly a serious affair. In the Catholic religion it was one of the sacraments, and no one thought of being married without first confessing and receiving absolution. But on more than one occasion Lisette had observed that mademoiselle's eyes were red; and surely mademoiselle's approaching marriage, of all marriages ever made, was not the one to be cried over.

It happened that, two evenings before the wedding-day, Estelle had been accompanied to the Dalbade by Lisette, who wished to say a few prayers on her own account to her patroness, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, who, with the *bon Dieu* and the rest of the heavenly host, had been somewhat neglected in the press of preparation for her mistress's wedding. Estelle sat down in her accustomed corner facing the high altar. Lisette drew out her rosary and knelt down. By-and-by Estelle knelt too, and while Lisette pattered away at her rosary, she prayed more earnestly than she had ever done before — not that she might be less miserable, not that she might have her own way, not even that she might be let alone, but that whatever came she might be

guided to do what was right. It got dark, and the church would have been shut up, only it was a confession night. At last, however, the church was deserted, except for one penitent, the beadle, who was waiting till her confession should be terminated, and Estelle and her maid, who, kneeling side by side, did not observe a woman in a cloak and veil, who, issuing from the door behind the Lady chapel, brushed close by them, looked back for an instant, and then walked quickly out by the nave door.

The woman walked down the street as far as the Jardin Royal, where a travelling carriage was waiting. Beside the carriage lounged a man whose face was concealed by his travelling-cap and cloak. He was smoking. As the woman in the cloak brushed past, he took the cigar from his lips and began to whistle "Pop goes the Weasel." The woman suddenly turned back and came up close to him, saying, "Pop goes the Weasel."

"All right!" the man exclaimed. "I thought it must be you, in spite of your muffings. Now then, let us be off."

"Have you your passport?" the woman in the cloak inquired.

"To be sure I have; and I have been waiting about here till I felt I could wait no longer. In another five minutes I should have come up to the house to look after you."

"And spoil every thing, you goose!"

"I began to think you had changed your mind, and were going to leave me in the lurch."

"I could not get away before, for the servants kept going backward and forward. We had better not stand dawdling here, at any rate. All you have to say can be said as we go along. There will be plenty of time for that, you know."

"In with you, then," said the man, handing her into the carriage, and then following himself.

"Now then, you lubber—I mean—*ong route, postillion*."

"I call this great fun," said the muffled figure, as the carriage emerged from the gateway of the Porte St. Cyprien. Her companion made no answer. He was looking out of the little window at the back of the carriage.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "there's a con-founded carriage with three horses coming after us at no end of a pace. It is stopping at the bridge-gate. All right," he said, after watching an instant; "it has taken the road to St. Valéry."

"Oh, Harry, what a fright you gave me!" exclaimed Julia Maurice as she threw off her cloak and veil.

"I was in a fright myself, I can tell you," said Harry Russell, taking off his travelling-cap. "I never felt so queer in my life as I did when I saw that carriage tearing across the bridge."

"We had better go back if you feel queer."

"Nonsense!" said Harry, angrily. "I don't mean that, and you know I don't."

"Pray what do you mean, then?"

"Mean? I should have thought you would understand well enough what my meaning was. I meant that if my mother had overtaken us it would have been altogether the most horrid sell that ever happened to a fellow."

"I believe you are as much at your mother's apron-string as Estelle is. Supposing she did overtake us, what then? There would be a row

of some sort, I dare say, but you need not turn back unless you liked. If I had known what a faint-hearted lover you were, I should have thought twice before trusting myself to you."

"Good heavens!" Harry exclaimed, pulling his whiskers in mingled wrath and perplexity. "She has lived all this while with my mother, and doesn't know her yet! Why, don't you believe that if my mother had been in that carriage our horses' heads would have been turned back ignominiously before now? I tell you I shall not feel secure till we have passed the first posting-house, nor scarcely then."

"One would think that Mrs. Russell was a man instead of a woman, to hear you talk," said Julia, contemptuously. "You are as much afraid of her as if she could whip you and send you to bed. I shall have to remind you that you are a man, and a lieutenant in her majesty's navy."

"By Jove!" Harry exclaimed, "that's just it! It is just because she is only a woman and I am a man, that I dread a collision. What could I do now, supposing—I say supposing, of course—she were to stop the carriage by any means, and open the door and get in?"

"You could take her up in your arms, and put her out into the road again."

"Could I, though? I wouldn't dare lay a finger on her. But there, you can't understand my feelings. If any thing so horrid did happen—any thing that parted you and me—I should feel eternally disgraced; and if I laid a finger on my mother I should feel eternally disgraced. But you don't understand, and you don't care to understand either. I don't believe you care a straw for me, else you would."

"Poor dear Harry," said Julia, laying her jewelled hand on his arm, "it is a shame to tease you so dreadfully. Don't be cross, for I won't do it any more."

Harry was quite ready to make peace. "You shouldn't chaff a fellow so," he said, kissing and pressing her hand. But as all the fingers were covered with rings, and as he did not care for kissing rings when there was any thing better in his way, he passed his arm round Julia's waist, and tried to kiss her coral lips.

Julia disengaged herself quietly. "You are upon your best behavior now," she said. "There will be plenty of time for kissing after we are married. Till then I don't want your kisses."

"Why, what a monster of cruelty you are!" Harry remonstrated. "Why shouldn't I have a kiss now? Why should I have to wait till after we are married? I don't want to wait so long as that."

"You will have to wait, nevertheless," Julia retorted. She laughed at his grumbling, told him to keep a good lookout, settled herself in her corner, and went to sleep.

* * * * *

"I wish you would not play those doleful 'Songs without Words,'" observed Mrs. Russell, on entering the drawing-room, where Estelle was seated at the piano. "I am really tired to death. Ring, will you, dear, for tea and lights. I shall be so thankful when all this is over."

"Are you so glad to get rid of me?" said Estelle, with a slight shade of bitterness, as she rose to obey her mother's order.

"No, I am not glad at all. But I am weary of the endless formalities which have to be ob-

served in France when one of the parties to the marriage is a foreigner. I have had to get from England, not only your baptismal register, but my marriage certificate. And ten days ago I was told that a copy of poor father's burial certificate was absolutely necessary, and that unless it were forthcoming the mayor would refuse to perform the ceremony."

"Why?" Estelle asked, interested at what might prove even a temporary obstacle to her marriage.

"It is the rule in France, in order to prevent a person marrying without the parents' consent. If a woman's father and mother are dead, she is obliged to get the consent of her grandfather and grandmother. And if they are dead, their decease must be proved before the law allows her to marry. I begged M. Peyre to wait here till the English post came in. Fortunately, the copy arrived this evening. It was a great relief to me to get it, as I began to think that if it did not come by to-night's post M. Peyre would imagine that I was divorced, or separated from my husband, or that he had run away from me, or, indeed, that I was not married at all, which you know would not have been pleasant."

Then Mrs. Russell went on to say that as the house would be dull after the wedding, she should go to England as soon as possible after. Harry had been speaking very seriously to her of the necessity of sending Alfred to an English school if she intended him to enter the navy. She should deposit Julia Maurice at her own home, and then pay a round of visits.

"And by-the-by, where is Julia?" she asked.

"I went to her room some time ago," Estelle said, "but she had locked herself in and would not answer me."

"Oh, indeed! One of her tempers again, no doubt."

Miss Maurice had offended on so many minor points of etiquette lately, that she was completely in disgrace with Mrs. Russell, who had felt it incumbent on her to administer some sharp lectures to the young lady on her "fast" tendencies. The only result of the lecturing had been a long fit of sulkingness, and they naturally supposed it to be a return of the same complaint which kept her in her room now.

"It struck me, one day," said Mrs. Russell—who, since the wedding-day of her daughter had been fixed, felt herself released in a measure from keeping watch over her behavior to Raymond, and therefore at liberty to observe what was going on around her—"It struck me one day that Julia was making a set at Harry. It was so absurd, that I can't tell how I should have thought it. Harry must be years younger than Julia; still, the idea having once entered my head, I shall not feel quite comfortable till I have got rid of her."

"You need not feel uncomfortable, mamma," said Estelle, who felt that silence was no longer binding, at all events as to the bare fact of Julia's engagement, since her mother's fears had been roused regarding Harry.

"She is engaged to a sort of cousin in India. But you must not say a word, for she keeps it quite a secret; even admiral and Mrs. Maurice do not know it."

Mrs. Russell's face was a study. "I never heard of any thing so improper, so shocking,"

she cried; "never! She is the most headstrong, unfeminine, ill-conditioned young woman I ever met with. If I am detained here after the wedding, I declare that I will send her back to England with Mathurine. I wonder what the world is coming to! In my day an English girl was the type of modesty and refinement. Now, any vulgarity, any impudence in either dress or action, is practised with impunity, as long as it attracts men's attention. All reticence, all refinement, is scouted and cast aside as old-fashioned."

This was a re-echoing of Mrs. Russell's last lecture to Julia. There lived at the Hôtel Lauzun an old, yellow, dried-up marquise, a very dragon of propriety. One memorable and never-to-be forgotten evening, Julia, when taken there by Mrs. Russell, had actually dared to absent herself from that lady's side and to walk about the rooms chaperoned by Harry. In fact she had studiously kept aloof from Mrs. Russell until the carriage was announced, when she made her appearance, and loudly proclaimed in the hearing of some French gentlemen who understood English, that she had had a "jolly lark!" Mrs. Russell never forgot nor forgave that speech. What would she have said had she been told of the balcony scenes which took place under her very nose?

"If every mother had such a good child as you—" As Mrs. Russell said this she crossed the room to embrace Estelle, but stopped halfway, in front of her writing-table, on which lay a large official-looking letter. "How is it I was not told of this?" she asked, with some annoyance.

"Told of what, mamma?" asked Estelle.

"Why, that here is a letter for Harry from the admiralty? What can all the servants be about? Where is Harry?"

"I have not seen him since dinner."

Mrs. Russell rang the bell sharply. Jean-Marie appeared with the tea-tray, and was immediately reproved for his carelessness in saying nothing of the letter. And where was monsieur?

Jean Marie explained that Monsieur Henri was gone to the opera, and that he had placed the letter where he would be sure to see it when he came back.

"Gone to the opera, to-night of all nights!" Mrs. Russell exclaimed in great vexation. "Estelle, what is the opera to-night?"

Estelle thought it was the *Somnambula*.

Then he would be sure to stay to the end, Mrs. Russell said, and Jean-Marie must go immediately, and tell him that an important English letter had arrived. She scribbled on a card, "A letter from the admiralty," and Jean-Marie took it, and departed.

"It must be an appointment," said Estelle, turning the letter over.

"Of course. He will just catch the early train from Bordeaux if he takes the night diligence. I must send and secure a place instantly."

Julia and her sulkingness were entirely forgotten by Mrs. Russell. She and Estelle sat down to the tea-table, full of speculation as to the station to which Harry might be sent, and expecting his return every moment, for the theatre was at no great distance. But if they had forgotten Julia, Mathurine had not. Mathurine had been to listen at her bedroom door three or four times during that evening. At first, the complete silence had convinced her that Mademoiselle Julia was

asleep, and, consequently, not concocting any mischief. Now, however, the continued silence alarmed instead of reassuring her, and she went to communicate her uneasiness to Mrs. Russell. Mademoiselle might be ill.

Mrs. Russell laughed at Mathurine's alarm. "I don't believe that she is ill, or that she has any thing the matter with her, except a fit of bad temper."

"It is true," said Mathurine, "that the young lady has a temper, but still—"

"She may stay where she is till to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Russell. "She is never so pleased as when people are making a fuss about her, and I am determined there shall be no fuss made."

"But, mamma," said Estelle, "she might be ill, as Mathurine says. Do let me go and speak to her. Perhaps she will answer me now."

She darted off, followed by Mathurine at a soberer pace. But she returned presently, looking frightened.

"We can get no answer from her by knocking, and we have listened, and there is the most absolute stillness in her room. Mamma, suppose any thing should have happened to her—suppose—"

"Yes, indeed," Mathurine interrupted bluntly. "Suppose she should be dead!"

"Dead! what nonsense!" was Mrs. Russell's exclamation. Nevertheless she rose and crossed the gallery which led to Julia's room. She knocked at the door and called her, but there was of course no reply. She began to feel uneasy when she found that Julia was as deaf to her voice as she had been to Estelle's and Mathurine's.

"It is as I said, madame sees," said Mathurine, coming forward and knocking again. By this time Lisette and the rest of the servants had descended from the kitchen, and every one of them tried her knuckles on the door with equal success.

"She surely must be dead," said Estelle, trembling all over.

"Poor heretic!" the servants whispered, crossing themselves, and shrugging their shoulders significantly. Lisette pulled out a rosary from her pocket, and began telling her beads very fast.

"Send for the porter, and let him break open the door," said Mrs. Russell.

"Stop, madame; pray try if there be a key that will fit the lock first," said Mathurine. Then, in a whisper, "For Heaven's sake let us avoid scandal, if possible."

"Scandal! What do you mean?"

"Madame—" Mathurine dared not hint at what she meant, Mrs. Russell's look was so terribly stern.

"Madame," cries Jean-Marie, hurrying up stairs, "I have been all over the town looking for monsieur, but can find him nowhere. The box-keeper at the theatre, who knows monsieur perfectly well, declares that he must have seen him had he either passed in or out of the house this evening. Is there any other place where he may be found?"

An awful suspicion entered Mrs. Russell's mind.

"Jean-Marie," she said, "I wish that door forced open instantly. Only do it with as little noise as you can. We are afraid something has befallen Mademoiselle Julia."

"Shall I run round to the locksmith and get a false key?" asked Jean-Marie.

"No; no delay. Break it open."

Jean-Marie got his tools, and Mrs. Russell leaned against the wall, with her eyes fixed on the door, regardless of the hammering. The servants put their hands over their ears, grimacing and whispering to each other. The porter's wife and children stood peeping at the gallery opposite, brimful of curiosity.

"There you are!" said Jean-Marie at last. The door was open, and Mrs. Russell walked in majestically.

"Julia, what can you mean by this?" she stopped short. The room was empty.

The servants rushed in. There was one instant's speechless consternation, followed by a deafening uproar.

"She is gone!" the women shrieked. "*Bon Dieu!* who ever heard of such a thing? *Bonne Sainte Vierge!* where can she be? *P'tit Jésus*, did you ever!"

"*Sa-pr-r-r-risti!*" issued from old Jean-Marie's lips like the roll of a drum. "Who would have thought it possible? *Ficht'r-re!*"

"Ah, but just look to madame!" cried one. "Madame is going to faint! Look! She is as white as a ghost!"

"Who said I was going to faint?" asked Mrs. Russell, with a haughty look at the ill-advised speaker. Mathurine, see that no one enters the room before Jean-Marie has replaced the lock. When that is done, you will bring me the key. You can go back to your work," she said, addressing the women-servants, who dispersed accordingly with some disappointment. They expected to have had a good gossip about mademoiselle's mysterious disappearance, with the porter and his wife. Mrs. Russell saw them clear off, and then, with a strict charge to Mathurine to keep watch over the room, she returned to the drawing-room with Estelle.

"Bolt the doors, child," she said, letting herself fall into the nearest seat. "What nonsense were you telling me about Julia's being engaged? She has gone off with Harry!"

"But she did tell me she was engaged; she told me a great deal about it," said Estelle.

"She must have told you, to throw dust into your eyes. As for me, I have been blind all along, shamefully blind. Now I think of it, I see a thousand little trifles which ought to have warned me. Mark my words, Estelle—that woman will come to no good. But I will frustrate her wicked plan if it be possible," said Mrs. Russell, rising and going to her writing-table.

"What are you going to do, mamma? Can I not do it for you?—you are shaking all over," said Estelle.

"No, my dear; no one can do this except myself." She scribbled a hasty note to the Baron de Luzarches, as follows:

"MY DEAR BARON,—I am in great distress and alarm about my eldest son. I want your help, and rely upon your friendship, which I feel sure will prompt you to come to me immediately."

This note she sealed, and then desired Estelle to ring for Jean-Marie. "Unbolt the doors, and sit down at the piano and play something—no matter what," she said; "it will be better for us not to appear upset."

Jean-Marie wondered somewhat to hear the sound of music when he entered, and to see his mistress reclining in her accustomed low chair, apparently absorbed in listening.

"Jean-Marie, I am so sorry to have to send you out again after your race round the town in search of monsieur. I want to send a note to Monsieur de Luzarches, but you must take a cab from the nearest stand; I can not have you walking that distance to-night."

Madame was too good, Jean-Marie said. He would run day and night on madame's errands with only too much pleasure: nevertheless, being not quite so young as he had been, he would avail himself of her graciousness, and take a cab.

"And as you come back, order a carriage with post-horses from the Hôtel du Midi; and see them put in yourself."

"You are going after them?" inquired Estelle. "But how can you know the route they have taken?"

"I do not know, but I can guess. I guess that they have taken the road to Auch, and that they intend going to Pau. And I intend to follow and bring her back, and send Harry to England. He can not hesitate when he sees the admiralty letter."

"The wedding will be put off, I suppose," said Estelle quietly.

"The wedding! And the contract is to be signed to-morrow, and there are people coming!" cried Mrs. Russell, wringing her hands in genuine despair. "What can I do?" she exclaimed, pacing up and down. "What will the Montaigus say? Oh, that my house should be the scene of such a scandal! Never, never will I receive that wicked young woman as my daughter. If Harry can be so miserably weak as to be lured into marrying her, he must take the consequences."

"They will not find it very easy to get married," said Estelle. "I happened to open an old book in the library the other day, when I was making a new book-list, and I read something about marriages between British subjects in France. As well as I remember, it was by no means such an expeditious affair to get married abroad."

"Get the book directly, and show me what you read," said her mother.

Estelle fetched the book, and read as follows: "A marriage in a foreign country between British subjects is valid in England either when it has been solemnized in the house or chapel of the British ambassador by a minister of the Church of England; or, as a general rule, when the parties have married in the form established in the country in which the marriage is celebrated, and it is valid by the laws of that country. Or, lastly, since the recent statute of 12 and 13 Vic. chap. 68, when the marriage has been celebrated before a British consul who has been duly authorized for that purpose. For a marriage in the ambassador's house or chapel no notice or previous residence is necessary. The parties intending to marry in the city (Paris) are required to make oath or declaration before the consul to the effect that they are of age, or that the proper consent has been obtained, and that there is no lawful impediment to the marriage. A fee of 20s. is paid for the office in London in which the register-book of these marriages is kept."

"That's not it," said Mrs. Russell. "That

only holds good for Paris. Dear, dear, how the time flies! I shall have to set off alone—"

"Wait, mamma, there is something more:

"To marry at a British consulate in France both parties must have dwelt within its district not less than one calendar month next preceding when notice is given by one of them to the consul of the intended marriage.

"A copy of the notice is suspended at the consulate.

"The consul may grant a license for the marriage.

"When the marriage is by license, both parties have to make oath or declare that there is no impediment to marriage, and that both of them have had for one calendar month previously their usual place of abode within the district of the consul, and that the proper consent has been obtained in case of either of them being a minor—"

"That's it!" cried Mrs. Russell. "She can't marry him; she will have to come back as she went—Julia Maurice. Julia Maurice, with a character destroyed forever. She laid a snare for my son, and she is caught in it herself. Caught; caught," she repeated, pacing up and down, "in her own toils. She may call herself any age she pleases, you know," she said, stopping and addressing Estelle, "but Harry is not twenty-one, so the consul dare not marry them. I might save myself the fatigue of the journey, and wait till they come back, for come back they must." And Mrs. Russell laughed at the idea of Julia's discomfiture.

"Oh, mamma, but you surely will go for her and bring her back, else she will die of shame," said Estelle, blushing at the bare thought of the mortification in store for Julia.

"Die of shame? I should just like to see her!"

"But how people will talk if both she and Harry are absent at the wedding; and if you don't overtake them now—"

"That is true. People will talk, indeed, and when once they begin there is no knowing what may not be said. They may even blame me; and for your sake, my dear child, I must keep free from blame. If Monsieur de Luzarches is not come when the carriage drives up, I shall not wait for him, for every moment is precious. I wonder whether Jean-Marie found him at home or not?"

The question was answered by M. de Luzarches himself, who, having so far forgotten his age and dignity as to run up stairs, now halted, panting on the threshold.

"My dear friend," cried Mrs. Russell, running to him, "come and sit down. This is truly kind." And then she explained her need of him in a few words, and those few as biting as possible.

"I see; I understand perfectly," said the old gentleman when she had finished. "My dear madame, however came you to trust eyes like those for one instant?"

"Eyes like what?" asked Mrs. Russell impatiently.

"Why, like Mademoiselle Julie's, to be sure. And not only eyes, but mouth, nose, physiognomy in toto. If you had deigned to ask my opinion—Well, well, you will know better another time. *Experientia docet*. Now let me think." The baron relapsed into a meditative silence for exactly two minutes, at the end of which he looked up,

shook his head, and said, half aloud, "After all, do you know, the situation strikes me as being extremely comical."

"Oh, baron, pray don't look on the comical side of the matter now," implored Estelle.

The baron blew a kiss at her, sat still till carriage-wheels were heard in the court below, and then jumped up. "Madame, I have a happy thought. Let us drive to the police-office the first thing."

"The police-office!" Mrs. Russell exclaimed aghast. "My dear friend, consider a little before you go there. For all our sakes, consider the publicity. As it is, there will be quite enough of that, I fear."

"You neither understand me, nor our French police. You are not in England, where every thing that goes on at the police-office gets put into the papers. This is what I intend doing. I intend to give a full description of our runaways, and request the superintendent to telegraph to Auch to the authorities there, with a full personal description: it will of course be impossible for them to escape the notice of the gendarmes at the posting-houses and diligence-offices. So that, if they really are on their way to Auch, we may safely count upon their being detained till you and I get there. Now let me tell you, that no work is done so silently as the work you put into the hands of the police," said M. de Luzarches in conclusion.

"But what pretext will the police have for taking them into custody?"

"Trust the police for finding a pretext," said the baron. "They will ask to look at their passports. Ten to one but they have forgotten them. If they have not, the police may pretend something is wanting—any thing."

"Baron, I can only put myself into your hands entirely," said Mrs. Russell. Then she turned to give some last directions to Estelle. "See that the rooms are prepared as I intended for to-morrow evening, and that the things are ordered—the ices and all the rest of it. And do not let the servants be running all over the town gossiping, instead of attending to their work. If visitors come, the answer is to be that madame is not visible. You will see nobody, of course."

A very few moments brought the two travellers to the police-office. M. de Luzarches entered; Mrs. Russell sat as far back in the carriage as possible, and drew down her veil, ashamed of being recognized by the respectable-looking gendarmes and sergents-de-ville, of whom three or four were lounging about the door, off duty.

"Before long," said M. de Luzarches, as he reseated himself, "our message will be on its way to Auch. The *Porte St. Cyprien*, postillion." And away they clattered over the rough stones.

"How luckily it happens that my wife is away just now!" said the baron as soon as the ill-paved faubourg St. Cyprien was passed, and they were fairly on the road to Auch.

"Why is it lucky? She will be home to-morrow."

"So may we. If she were at home now, she would certainly take it into her wise head that in a fit of Anglo-mania I had eloped with you, and then there would be a carriage number three tearing up the road to Auch."

"She is welcome to come after us, I am sure," said Mrs. Russell, laughing. "And now, baron,"

she continued, taking off her bonnet, "I am going to take a nap, and you had better follow my example. You will find plenty of wraps on the front seat."

"Behold the English customs," thought the baron, as he wrapped a shawl round his head. "Son runs away with young lady visitor. Mother of family runs after her offspring. Friend of the family accompanies this distracted parent, stays away from home all night, catches his death of cold and rheumatism, and, to crown all, gets an awful blowing up from his wife as soon as he reappears at his own domicile. A nice situation, upon my word of honor!"

Here the baron's meditation broke off, and he closed his eyes. Ten minutes after he was snoring so loud as to wake Mrs. Russell.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH SEVERAL PEOPLE ARE MYSTIFIED.

"Show me your passport, please," said a gendarme, poking his head in at the window of a travelling carriage which was changing horses at the posting-house just outside the town of Auch.

It was getting towards morning. At midnight the lieutenant of gendarmerie had had a communication from the *préfet* of Auch, and the gendarmes on duty had been on the alert ever since, but had as yet come upon no two individuals at all answering to the description forwarded from Toulouse.

Inside the carriage was a lady who seemed asleep. The gendarme apologized for disturbing her. "Madame is quite alone?" he asked.

"Quite alone," Julia answered, wondering at the question.

"Madame will have the goodness to show her passport?"

Julia gave it readily. The passport bore out her assertion that she was alone; the gendarme gave it back, saying, "Madame is going to Pau, probably?"

This question, coming as it did after the inquiry as to her being alone, made Julia feel uneasy; but she replied with the utmost calmness, "To Pau! Oh dear no; not quite so far as that. I am going to Vic Bigorre, to stay with a sister of mine who lives there."

"Ah, madame is going to Vic Bigorre. Very good." And the gendarme took his foot off the carriage-step, satisfied that this traveller was not the individual wanted. As he was turning away Julia asked what o'clock it was.

"Past three, madame," he replied.

And then Julia begged him to hold his lantern so that she might set her watch, which had stopped. "I am exceedingly obliged to you, monsieur," she said when she had done it.

"Quite welcome," the gendarme said. "The horses seem long in coming. Does not madame feel impatient?"

"Not at all," returned Julia; "only tired and sleepy." The gendarme looked about, and up and down the road. There was not the faintest shadow of a man to be seen.

"I wish madame a good journey," he said, and departed, directing his steps towards a cabaret on the roadside, where the main road branches off to Agen on the right, and on the left to Tarbes

and Pan. In the chimney corner another gendarme was sitting, who, addressing his comrade as he entered by the name of Antoine, inquired if any vehicle was in sight on the Toulouse road.

"None. There is a carriage with one person in it changing horses yonder, but there is no trace of the people we want."

"Good. They may pass yet, for it is but early. I'll go and have a look round."

"Tis a raw morning, Serres," said Antoine.

"Have a thimbleful of cognac." Serres tossed his thimbleful off, drew up the hood of his cloak, and walked down towards the posting-house. A thick mist had come on, so that the travelling carriage was not to be seen; but he conjectured that it was still there, as he could hear the horses kicking and the hostlers swearing at them. He went on, peering right and left through the mist. Presently, hearing a cheerful whistle behind him, he stopped and drew himself close up to the ditch on the roadside to let the whistler pass. All at once he pricked up his ears. "That is not a French tune," he thought, "and that is a strange sort of step, too. How he flings along!" And he followed.

The whistling presently ceased, and the smoke of tobacco reached Serres's nostrils.

"Ah, ha," he thought again, "what sort of a foot-passenger are you, that can afford cigars of that quality, I should like to know?" And he quickened his pace.

By the time he was come up to the posting-house, the ostlers were fastening the traces of the extra horse, for the road is heavy for many miles beyond Auch. The foot-passenger whom he had followed was standing smoking at the carriage-door, and the person inside was speaking to him.

"It is getting miserably chilly," she was saying. "I suppose one would not dare taste the coffee at this wretched little place?"

"I should say not," was Harry's answer. "You must have a nip of cognac out of my flask." And the flask being produced, Julia, nothing loath, took a nip.

"If you were to take cold, and get your cough back, I should never forgive myself. You must take another nip, Julia, if it were but for my sake."

Thus abjured, Julia tasted the vulgar liquid a second time, and professed herself much comforted.

"I'll come inside again when I have finished my cigar," said Harry, jumping on the box.

"Now then, postillion, *dipayshy, ong root!*"

"Your passport, monsieur, if you please?" said Serres, touching him on the sleeve.

"Eh? what? Confound you, why couldn't you ask for it before they had finished putting in the horses?"

"Your passport, monsieur, if you please?" Serres repeated.

"I hear you well enough," Harry growled out, as he produced the document in question. "Subject of her Britannic majesty, and so forth. It's all right, old fellow; look at the lion and the unicorn. Now then, postillion!"

"Wait!" said Serres, lifting his forefinger.

The postillion obeyed. "What are you waiting for, you lubber? Why don't you get on when I tell you?" cried Harry.

With great deliberation Serres took the passport, lit a small lantern, and peered at every line on the paper.

"I see here," he said, "that monsieur is described correctly, but I fail to perceive that madame is mentioned."

"Madame is not mentioned, as it happens," replied Harry. "Out with your passport, Julia, quick. It looks exactly as if the fellow were keeping us here on purpose. You see that madame has her own passport, don't you? It's all right. Here is a ten-franc piece for you to drink to madame's good health."

"I don't like his looks," quoth Julia; "and there was a man here before, asking to see my passport."

"Madame is the wife of monsieur?" Serres inquired.

"I'll knock you down if you dare say the contrary," was Harry's answer; "so look out."

"There will be no necessity for monsieur's giving himself that trouble. I must request monsieur and madame to accompany me quietly, and to consider themselves in custody till they can give a clear account of this passport business. Monsieur will descend from the box and step inside."

"In custody!" roared Harry. "Take your hand off me, you wretched sneaking lubber of a Frenchman, if you don't want to be made mincemeat of in less than no time. You shall feel the weight of an English fist for once in your life—you shall!"

"Don't touch the man, Harry, I entreat, I implore you!" shrieked Julia. "He would as soon shoot you dead as not. Do get in quietly. At the worst we can only be detained two or three hours. I feel sure that it is his stupidity, not the passports being wrong; but don't you see that you complicated matters by declaring I was your wife? If you had not—"

"What on earth was I to do? You wouldn't have had me let him suppose that you were not my wife, would you?"

To which question Julia returned no answer.

"It was unfortunate to have raised his suspicions, but we must make the best of the situation. I suppose they will let us have a fire and something to eat, if we pay them well for getting it. I suppose we shall have to go to the police-station; or do you think they would allow us to go to a hotel, if we promised not to leave it?"

"I am sure I can't tell," said Harry; "but I know that if I speak to that fellow again I shall not be able to help knocking him down. I hate France. I declare I'll never enter the vile country again when once I'm out of it."

Agreeably to Serres's orders, the postillion had driven back through the town. The carriage now stopped in the courtyard of a large white building, over whose gateway waved the tri-colored flag. Serres let down the steps, and requested them to descend.

"Is this the police-station?" Julia inquired.

The gendarme returned no answer. "You must come this way," said he, and pointed to a side door giving access to a wing of the building. He took them up a dark, shabby staircase, made them enter a room, and locked the door upon them.

"What a wretched hole!" was Julia's exclamation. It was a bare, whitewashed room, with

a floor of red, unpolished tiles, and no furniture besides a deal table and a few common rush-bottomed chairs. The window looked into a well-court, and the air which came in as they opened it was of such a description as to make them quickly shut it again.

"I never did know of such an awful sell as this," said Harry. "To be stopped by a beast of a French gendarme! and I would bet any thing you like that both our passports were as right as a trivet."

"I wonder why the gendarme would not answer me when I asked whether this was the police-station?"

"I suppose he thought he would not answer a useless question. Like his impudence!"

"I don't believe this is the police-station. The tops of the railings in the courtyard were gilt, did you observe?"

"No. I was in too great a rage to look at any thing."

"I only managed to observe just that; it was so foggy."

"I wonder how long those French brutes are going to keep us locked up in this miserable hole?"

"At any rate, Harry, this is the very last place to which your mother would think of coming to look for us."

"Very true. There is some comfort in that," sighed Harry. "But I should have liked just to knock that fellow down, nevertheless."

Meantime, gendarme Antonio had fallen asleep on the settle at the cabaret, and had roused himself to find it sunrise. "Where is Serres gone?" he asked of the mistress of the cabaret.

"He has not been back since he first went out," was the reply.

"Down there at the turning, I dare say," thought Antoine, as he stretched himself, "watching the road like a tomcat watching for a mouse." Then Antoine, with much confidence in his own acuteness, walked up the road, intending to pass through the town and look out for vehicles approaching from the Toulouse side: thinking what a rage Serres would be in when he found that while he had been watching one end of Auch, the suspected individuals had been taken at the other.

Antoine accordingly walked on as far as the Place Royale. As he was crossing the Place to enter the *Coir d'Egny*, a travelling carriage, with two people inside, and its four horses all in a foam, dashed in from the Rue d'Arcole, the street which leads to the Toulouse road; and Antoine placed himself directly in its way.

"Halt!" he cried, as the postillion called to him furiously to get out the way. "Halt! In the name of the law!"

The cocked hat and the authoritative words were quite enough to insure obedience. The postillion drew up suddenly, and felt in his side-pocket for his license. That being safe, the law could have nothing to say to him.

"What do you mean by pulling up in the middle of the road?" cried M. de Luzarches out of the window. "Go on, you blockhead!"

"Show your passport, if you please," said Antoine, opening the carriage-door.

"Does one want a passport merely to go from Toulouse to Auch?" the baron inquired.

"Certainly."

"In that case, I regret to say, we are unprovided."

"Then I must trouble you to come with me to the préfecture, and give an account of yourselves."

"Just so. We were on our way there."

"Indeed!" quoth Antoine, jumping on the box, in high glee at the thought of the rage Serres would be in; for there was no doubt but that these were the people "wanted!"

"This delay will be fatal," said Mrs. Russell, as, in answer to M. de Luzarches's entreaties to be allowed to communicate with the préfet, he was told that M. le Préfet could not be disturbed before his usual hour for rising.

"It is only just sunrise," said Mrs. Russell, in despair. "I dare say the préfet won't be stirring for the next two hours, and in that time what a start they will have had! What is to be done, Baron? This evening Estelle's marriage-contract was to have been signed, and yet, how can I go back without that girl?"

"Madame," said M. de Luzarches, "I do not disguise from you that the situation is every moment becoming more complicated. Nevertheless, you must not lose hope. The préfet is my friend, and, even though we be kept waiting for two hours, depend upon it that when once we do see him, a very few words from me will be sufficient to induce him to send off a telegram to Pau to intercept the fugitives before they can enter the town."

It was with scant ceremony that they were made to alight and enter an up-stairs room belonging to the official part of the préfecture. The gendarme locked the door upon them. Mrs. Russell stood one moment listening to the clank of his sword as he went down stairs, and then sat down by the table, and leaned wearily against it. She had not felt any fatigue while she was in actual pursuit, but now that she was reduced to inaction it began to weigh her down. Besides which, her hopes of preventing the marriage between her son and Julia were becoming fainter and fainter. She covered her face and heaved a despondent sigh. She had been too absorbed in her disappointment and annoyance to observe that there were two people in the room, sitting close together by the window. But M. de Luzarches—who having no personal stake in Mrs. Russell's affairs was in no way absorbed or absent—had no sooner entered the room than he fixed his eye upon the backs of those two individuals. He now walked straight up to where they were sitting, and taking off his hat, said, with a very low bow, "Monsieur and mademoiselle, I have the honor to wish you a good-morning. May I venture to express a hope that you were not much jolted by your journey?"

Mrs. Russell jumped up and ran across the room.

"Oh, Harry, Harry, my dear boy!" she cried, and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

Julia gave two little shrieks. She was tired, and hungry, and sleepy, and felt not unreasonably startled. Mrs. Russell took no more notice of her than if she had not been there.

"My dear boy, my dearest Harry!" she cried, all fluttering and trembling, as she unfastened the clasp of her travelling-bag, "what do you think I have here for you? A letter from the admiralty, dear, that I have been travelling all

night to give you. Oh! and what could have induced you to go off like this, just two days before your sister's wedding? But do open the letter."

"We intended to be back in time for the wedding," said Harry, feeling utterly discomfited, and glad that the broad sheet of paper was an excuse for not lifting his eyes to meet his mother's. "If I had known what was to be the upshot of this business," he thought, "I would not have undertaken it for a thousand pounds. Her bringing the admiralty letter puts me in the wrong box entirely. I only wish she would have blown me up instead of kissing and my-dearing."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Russell had drawn Julia to the other end of the room, and now proceeded to torture her in a gentle, ladylike manner.

"Are you at all aware," she began, "of what a terrible position you are in? My poor, dear, romantic child, you have forgotten that there are no Gretna Greens in this country. It was most fortunate that I got here in time to stop you. You would have found out at Pau that your journey had been taken in vain."

"A consul resides at Bayonne, and we should have gone on there," said Julia, who had partly recovered herself.

"My dear creature," said Mrs. Russell, in tones which betrayed much sarcasm, in spite of her endeavor to infuse as much sympathy as possible into them for Harry's ear—"My dear, silly child, not all the consuls in France could have married you. My son is a minor."

"A minor!" Julia repeated, in blank dismay; for Harry looked at least four-and-twenty.

"Yes, my dear. And no consul would dare grant a license to a minor."

"Then, in that case," said Julia—who, although she had no objection to a boy-lover, did not at all like the idea of a boy-husband, but who felt that there was nothing for her but to brazen the matter out—"in that case, Mrs. Russell, we should have gone straight up to Paris, and been married at the British embassy."

"No, dear, you could not. Harry being a minor, and I his only surviving parent, my consent, either verbal or in writing, must have been forthcoming." Of the correctness of this last statement she was not quite certain, but she hazarded it. "And only think how frightfully compromised you would have been had you actually gone to Paris! As it is—" and Mrs. Russell's head gave an ominous shake, and her lips closed as if they refused the task of depicting the awfulness of Julia's position. As for Julia, for the first time in her life she confessed to herself that she had acted foolishly; for the first time, she felt a dread of consequences.

"Take me back, oh, do take me back!" she faltered. "Yes, it was a blessing you came here. But I didn't mean any harm—really I didn't—and oh, please don't let any body know—"

"Of course, my dear, I'll do my best; but you can not be surprised if some unpleasant reports do get about; you must remember, all the servants knew of your going off." And with this stinging Mrs. Russell left her and went back to Harry.

"Well, Harry, what is your news?"

"I'm appointed to the *Hero*; a capital ship; she is a steam-frigate of four hundred horse-power. I know a good many of the fellows on board

of her, so that it will be pleasant for me. I have to join immediately, of course."

"What is her destination? do you know?"

"I am not told; but there was a talk at Portsmouth of her being sent to the west coast of Africa."

"The west coast of Africa!" Mrs. Russell thought of the fever, and trembled. The idea of her son lying sick and helpless, and her not being there to nurse him, took away all her strength. "Ah!" she sighed, sitting down by him, "ah! that coast!"

"Cheer up, mother. Why, you never changed color when I was going off to the Australian station, and why should you bother yourself now? You know a sailor is always on the move."

"I was thinking of the African fever," she replied.

"You must not think of it," said Harry, thankful to be able to speak of any thing that did not concern Julia. "I do assure you that I believe fellows make a fuss about that fever because they find the African station dull in comparison with the Mediterranean or the Australian. Of course I don't mean to pretend that it's not more feverish than some stations, but I believe that if a fellow minds what he is about, he need not get the fever there sooner than at Alexandria or Sydney. And after all, mother, if a fellow does kick the bucket—why, if nobody died, there would be no promotion—and *dulce et decorum est*—and all the rest of it, you know."

"Don't, Harry! I can not bear your talking in that manner, I can not indeed; I feel shaken."

"Well, mother, I promise you I'll rig out a medicine-chest that shall beat the doctor's into fits; and I'll go on the sick-list if my little finger so much as aches. I can't do more, now can I?"

"I'm sure you will be prudent, dear, for my sake as well as your own."

"Mother," said Harry, with some hesitation, but emboldened by the kind tone of Mrs. Russell's voice: "Mother dear, you will promise me not to be savage with—with—Julia? She is very fond of me, she is indeed, and—"

"Fond of him! I dare say! the creature!" thought Mrs. Russell, setting her teeth.

"And—well, you know, the fact is we might have been man and wife by this time, only we were stopped; and I hope you will please to consider our marriage deferred, not broken off. It is due to her that it should be so considered," said Harry, with some dignity.

"Even had you gone on without interruption," said Mrs. Russell in her quietest tones, "you would have found a marriage with her impossible owing to your being a minor!"

"What!" exclaimed Harry in consternation. "Would not the consul at Bayonne have married us?"

"No consul in France would have dared to do so, unless you had been furnished with my consent in writing. It is indeed fortunate that I arrived here in time to stop you from going on. As it is, the disgrace, the inevitable exposure, that Julia has drawn down upon herself are sufficiently appalling to me. Her good name—"

Harry actually groaned. "Her good name!—and that beast of a gendarme took her for my wife—and I ought to have been on my way to England hours and hours ago! Mother, do this

for me. Come with us to Paris, and let us be married there : do, for pity's sake!"

"How can I go to Paris?" asked Mrs. Russell. "This evening Estelle's marriage-contract is to be signed, and the wedding is fixed for to-morrow."

"If Estelle's wedding is deferred, her character won't suffer," Harry insisted. "Do you not see that our marriage must take place? Would you wish me to act so that if Julia had a brother he would call me out? Let Estelle wait; I dare say she won't mind."

"But I should. And you are mistaken if you think that no unpleasantness would arise from her wedding being put off at the last moment. You and Julia are both in a position which is entirely of your own making. It would be wrong in me to let Estelle suffer in any way for your fault. I am sorry for Julia, but I can not consent to what you propose."

Further entreaties on Harry's side were cut short by the appearance of an official, who desired their attendance in the next room.

The préfet was enveloped in a very flowery dressing-gown, and seated at his writing-table. The two gendarmes stood near the door, both looking heated and angry. They had had a violent altercation, each declaring that his capture was the right one.

The official took his place at his desk and spread a sheet of government foolscap ready. The préfet, who had been looking over some papers, now said, without looking up, "Take down their names and surnames."

"Octave-Charles-Joseph-Xavier-Louis, Baron de Luzarches, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor," said the Baron, briskly. "Hey! what's that?" exclaimed the préfet, jumping up. "Luzarches, how on earth did you come here? And what have you been doing?"

"Doing? Travelling all night. *Apropos*, permit me to introduce these ladies as my friends, and this young officer, Monsieur Roussel, the son of madame—young officer, my dear, of the most distinguished in the English navy. And now two words with you in your private room."

The baron's interview had not lasted many moments before the préfet's bell rang and was answered by the clerk, who, on returning, told the two gendarmes that their further attendance was not required. M^{onsieur} had given a satisfactory account of himself and the rest of the party to M. le Préfet. Serres and Antoine left the room sulkily; each would have preferred that his captives should have turned out to be people of importance—plotters against the government, or first class swindlers. Harry looked after them as they went with some lingering regret that he had not knocked Serres down. In the préfet's private room M. de Luzarches and the imperial functionary were enjoying a hearty laugh.

"But what a country England must be!" said the préfet, when he had had his laugh out. "What an awfully immoral country! I had indeed heard that it is permitted to Englishmen to put their wives up to auction, and that a most extraordinary amount of liberty is allowed to their unmarried women; but this story of yours surpasses all that I could ever have conceived. And do you actually mean to tell me that such a marriage might have taken place in England,

and that the parents could not have prevented it?"

"So Madame Roussel tells me," said the baron.

"But when that young lady goes back to her own country, will she not be frightfully compromised by this affair?"

The baron shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Here of course she would never be received again, if such an escapade got wind. She would be forced to hide herself in a convent. But then the English are so eccentric! There is no knowing how they may choose to view a fact. But the English view of facts as regards Mademoiselle Julia troubles me very little. What does trouble me is my uncertainty as to what view our good people at Toulouse may take of Madame Roussel, who has been perfectly blameless in the matter. I can not sufficiently express to you my admiration of her heroic attitude. She acted last night with the decision and promptitude of a general surprised by the enemy. There were neither faintings, nor screamings, nor useless words. And in quite another way her daughter is as admirable as she is herself; perfectly refined in mind, perfectly well brought up in every way. Quite another sort of girl to that creature in there, I assure you."

Just about the time when Mrs. Russell, Julia, Harry, and M. de Luzarches were sitting down to break their fast at the préfet's well-spread board, Mrs. Russell's cook Marie was having a gossip with Madame Fleury's cook, as the two jogged along with their market-baskets towards the Place du Capitole. Marie, in spite of Mathurine's hint to her to hold her tongue, or perhaps because of the hint, told the whole story of Mademoiselle Julie's elopement to her friend, in strict confidence. Madame Fleury's cook was a Béarnaise, and Marie was a Béarnaise, and that was enough to make them friends and confidants in a strange country, as they considered Langue-d'oc to be. Coming back from market, Madame Fleury's cook met the Count de Montaignu's valet; and the valet being a Béarnaise and her particular friend, she told him in confidence what Marie had told her. The valet, going home to give his master his morning cup of coffee, met the comtesse's maid coming out of the Dominican chapel in Rue Vélane. Gracieuse being a Béarnaise, he could not do less than tell her the spicy tale Madame Fleury's cook had just told him.

"You will not let this go farther," the valet said in conclusion. "Let people manage their affairs as best they can: it is not our interest to make mischief."

But Gracieuse was too horrified at the story she had heard to promise silence. "I think, on the contrary," she said, "that the whole family Roussel must be tainted, and that a connection with it ought to be stopped, even at the eleventh hour. I myself never approved of Monsieur Raymond's marrying a heretic. If the marriage happens to be broken off, I shall consider it is by the interposition of the Holy Virgin and Monsieur Raymond's patron. I wonder how Madame la Comtesse, who has such particular devotion for our blessed Lady, could ever have brought herself to think of such a marriage as this for her son."

"There was such a fine fortune, you see," said

the valet. "I would advise you to hold your tongue, mademoiselle; you may get no thanks for telling."

"I shall think about it," said Gracieuse. But she had not been many minutes in Madame de Montaigu's room before the tale was told. Madame listened with a look much resembling that of a cat about to spring, and when Gracieuse had finished, she exclaimed, "The whole family is tainted!" rushed to the bell-rope, and rang so furiously that two of the lacqueys rushed in from the anteroom, supposing that either madame or madame's parrot must have fallen down dead.

"Tell my son," she said, "to come here without a moment's delay."

Monsieur Raymond had sat up nearly all night writing poetry, and was in a sound sleep now, his valet said, refusing to wake him.

"He will have to wake and hear me, nevertheless," said madame. Wrapping a silk handkerchief round her head, she went to her son's room and banged the door after her loud enough to wake him.

Raymond opened his eyes in amazement at the strange figure approaching his bed. But as it was a most unusual thing for his mother to leave her room until she been made fit for company by Gracieuse, his amazement at her attire was quickly merged into anxiety; and he exclaimed, "Is my father ill?"

"Not that I know of; but there have been such awful doings at the Hôtel St. Jean that I could not lose a moment in speaking to you."

"Is Mees Estelle ill? No? Then what on earth can be the matter?" cried Raymond, sitting up.

"It is an affair in which that girl that is staying here is concerned."

"Mademoiselle Julie? Bah! how should her affairs interest me? If it was only to speak of her, it was not worth while to come to my room with such an ugly nightcap on," said Raymond, turning round, and burying his head in the pillow with a yawn, with every intention of going to sleep again. Madame de Montaigu stamped on the floor.

"Never mind my nightcap," she said, putting up her hands nevertheless to smooth the starched frills, which were standing up above her forehead. "This matter does concern you, and must concern you. I consider the whole family to be tainted," madame concluded, in the very words her maid Gracieuse had used on hearing the story from the valet.

Raymond was by this time as wide awake and as eager to hear his mother as she could desire. He heard all she had to say, and then declared confidently that the whole story was a vile fabrication.

"I wonder at a woman of your acuteness listening to such a tissue of nonsense for a moment. And I wonder at Gracieuse having the impudence to retail it."

"Gracieuse believed she was doing her duty in letting me know, and so she was. And I believe that there is never smoke without fire, and that something has happened. I shall take steps to find out, and if it is of such a nature as to implicate the Russells in the slightest degree, I shall stop your marriage." Madame opened the bedroom door as she said this.

"Mother, nothing can happen to implicate

Mees Estelle. Do not let that idea take possession of you."

"I said, 'the Russells,' all or any of them. I never supposed that little pale-faced chit had done anything; she doesn't look as if she were clever enough to be naughty," said Madame de Montaigu.

"Listen to me one moment: I mean what I say, mother. If my marriage is broken off, I shall die. I have made up my mind that I can not live without Estelle. If you forbid my marriage, I will not try to live without her. I suppose you do not wish to become my murderer?"

"Don't talk like such a fool!" said madame, banging the door after her.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONSIEUR RAYMOND BEGINS TO WOO IN EARNEST.

ESTELLE had risen as usual at sunrise. After having watered her flowers and fed her goldfish, and seen Alfred off to the early morning school, she retired to the garden to learn her Greek lesson, as she would have done had her mother been home. By the time she knew it the sun was high, and the air getting hot. She got some books from the house, sat down under the shade of a Siberian crab-tree just coming into blossom, and began to read "Froissart's Chronicles."

In the midst of her reading of the chapter where the rare old gossip tells of his presenting his book to Richard of Bourdeaux, and of his gracious reception by that elegant young prince, she heard footsteps along the gravel-walk; and, looking up, saw, as she expected, her maid Lisette with a tray, on which were a cup of coffee, a bunch of roses, and the Toulouse paper. But behind Lisette came Raymond de Montaigu, with great disturbance written in his face. When Estelle caught sight of him she was so astonished that she dropped her book and started up, meditating instant flight. But one glance showed her that flight was impossible, for, except for the gravel path in front, the crab-tree stood surrounded by an impervious thicket of clematis. There was no alternative but to remain and speak to him; so she waited till he was near enough, and then drawing herself up to her full height, made him a stately courtesy, at the same time giving Lisette a look which asked as plainly as possible what she was thinking of to bring Monsieur Raymond there. And Lisette, understanding the look, answered hurriedly, "I could not help it, mademoiselle. I could not prevent his following me; he was not to be got rid of." Then laying the breakfast-tray on the garden-seat, she stood aside, wondering what would be the result of the interview.

There was just a grain of truth in Lisette's assertion. Raymond had presented himself at the door, and had inquired for Mrs. Russell. Jean-Marie had replied that madame had been suddenly called from home on business, but was hourly expected to return. It being clear from this answer that something had occurred, his mother's threat assumed in Raymond's estimation an importance which it had hitherto lacked entirely. A sudden impulse prompted him to ask for made-

moiselle. Jean-Marie would have informed him without more ado of her whereabouts, had not Mathurine, that dragoness and pearl of duennas, bid him, in her vigorous Languedocian patois, hold his tongue for a blundering fool; and then, turning to Raymond, told him curtly that mademoiselle received no one in the absence of her mother.

When Raymond had got half way down stairs, he saw Lisette standing with a breakfast-tray before a little oaken door at the end of the corridor. She stood with the tray poised on one hand, and with the other appeared to be fumbling with the latch. "I wonder in what corner of the garden mademoiselle will have hidden herself?" she said, in a perfectly audible voice.

Raymond darted forward and opened the door for her. "Thank you, monsieur," she said. "This is a terrible heavy door to move with one hand."

"Is that mademoiselle's breakfast?" he inquired.

"Yes. Might I ask you to shut the door after me, monsieur? Strange dogs come up sometimes, and mademoiselle is very particular about the flower-beds." Then, with a demure "good-morning," Lisette tripped away, seemingly oblivious of M. Raymond's existence. Raymond, with a full consciousness that he was sinning against propriety, followed her, and found himself in a very few moments face to face with Estelle. But even with his full consciousness of transgression, he had not expected such an annihilating reception as she gave him.

"To what cause may I attribute this very untimely visit, monsieur?" was the freezing inquiry which followed close upon Estelle's magnificent courtesy.

Raymond stood before her utterly abashed. A conviction came over him that nothing but the plain unvarnished truth would do, and he told it, stammering and hesitating for the first time in his life from sheer nervousness.

"I thought," he concluded, "that, considering the circumstances, as your mother was away from home, and as it was of so much consequence that the report should be contradicted forthwith—that I might venture to ask for your authority to contradict it. I have to beg pardon for intruding upon you and telling you all this; I could not have ventured on such a step had not my—the person who told me—actually believed it. And my mother felt some anxiety about the honor of the family. I am obliged to say all this to excuse myself. I trust you will forgive me. It is very astonishing what things people will believe sometimes. But don't think that I—that any one with a grain of sense believes it," he added, perceiving her heightened color.

"I am sorry to say that it is all true," Estelle murmured, feeling in her turn utterly abashed.

"All true!" Raymond repeated in amazement. And then, his mother's words recurring to him with redoubled force, he cried, "What will become of me? What will be the end of this?"

This exclamation gave a gleam of hope to Estelle. Her marriage might be delayed—broken off—who could tell?

"It will make a difference, no doubt," she said, resuming her former haughty manner.

"It will make no difference to me, mademoiselle, but it will to my mother; and I tremble to

think of how that difference may affect me. It is not with impunity that a man places himself in opposition to his family."

"Monsieur Raymond, I must beg you to understand clearly, that I am the last person who would wish to place you in opposition to your family."

"Mademoiselle, in speaking thus you scarcely consider the embarrassment—I may say the cruelty—of my position."

"I wish to make it easier, if I can. I say I will not be the one to make you act in opposition to your family."

"It is that which I complain of," said Raymond. "My position was embarrassed; you render it cruel when you say what means in so many words that you would give me up."

"That is what I do mean. It seems to me that I am doing you a kindness rather than the reverse."

"Listen to me, mademoiselle. My mother declared this morning that if there were truth in this report, she would forbid our marriage. I come here, and find, most unexpectedly, that it is actually true. I know then what I have to expect from my mother. She never had a heart in her life, so she is not likely to consider mine. I can not conceal from myself the gravity of this affair of Mademoiselle Julie's. It is in truth so scandalous, that it is difficult to believe how any man of honor could adopt such a line of conduct as that which monsieur your brother has seen fit to adopt."

"Monsieur!" Estelle exclaimed, quivering from head to foot with anger. "I wonder," she went on, speaking quickly and indignantly, "I do wonder that you should dare come here and tell me that my brother has been guilty of dishonorable conduct!"

"Pardon me, mademoiselle."

"No, I will not pardon. You would have thought twice before saying it if I had been a man. And that you should think it, only shows you to be as ignorant of English customs as my brother Harry is of French. Poor Harry!" she went on, her lips quivering with anger and vexation; "poor fellow! he would never have acted as he did last night had he known of the insuperable difficulties in his way. Had he been in England, it would have been far otherwise. It is even possible there for people to get married without either telling their families or running away."

"And their parents and friends receive them afterwards?" Raymond asked in much amazement.

"They can do as they please about that; but they can not break the marriage."

"What a strange country yours must be! I see, mademoiselle, that I spoke hastily and ignorantly, and I entreat your forgiveness. But you, who have lived so long in France, must be fully aware that society here takes a very different view of these matters."

"Yes, I know that."

"People who elope, whether married afterwards or not, are considered to have compromised themselves so gravely, that they must not hope to be received again. That is the view society takes. My mother, unhappily for my peace, chooses to take an extreme view. She chooses to consider it possible for others besides

the two parties concerned to be compromised. It is useless for me to represent that such an extreme view is ridiculous as well as unjust. My mother chooses to hold this or that view because she chooses; there is no appeal. She chose to make my marriage; now she chooses to mar it. And you know what a parent's authority goes for in France. I speak of my mother only, because she can make my poor old father do exactly as she likes. You know that there is a last resource against parental despotism: I have no alternative but to avail myself of it. Only, even that will do me no good unless you will promise to stand by me."

"But I do not wish you to avail yourself of it," said Estelle, who understood that he alluded to *les trois sommations respectueuses*—the three appeals, or summonses, which French sons and daughters are allowed to serve on parents who choose to thwart their matrimonial designs after they have attained majority. If, after the serving of the third summons, the parents' consent is not forthcoming, the marriage may take place without it. But this is a measure only resorted to in extreme cases; and such sons and daughters are branded by public opinion as undutiful children, and looked on coldly in consequence, no matter what the parents' tyranny may have been. Estelle listened in dismay as Monsieur Raymond declared his intention. "Monsieur, you must consider that such a course would give pain to your father and mother, besides causing great scandal."

"I will not care for that," he said, taking her hand. "I am ready to brave father and mother for your sake. You are more to me than they."

"I am sorry for you, but it must not be. As I said before, I decline to be the one to put you in opposition to your parents," said Estelle, as she tried to withdraw her hand. But Raymond held it fast.

"Have pity on me, mademoiselle! I have loved you from the first moment I saw you. Alas! till this unhappy morning I had looked forward to having the right to tell you of my love after to-morrow. I have been counting the days like a school-boy expecting his holidays. Waking and sleeping, you have occupied my thoughts. Heart and brain are alike yours. What more can I say?" He was bending over her hand now, and Estelle felt two hot tear-drops fall on it as he pressed his lips to it.

"I am not worth your love," she said, bewildered by the sudden passion in his voice and manner. She had supposed that her thirty thousand pounds was what he had wanted. And now it seemed that he was not satisfied with that, but must needs have love besides. And she had none to give him.

"Not worth my love! Oh! mademoiselle, you are worth more to me than I can tell. I would endure years of suffering if only I might call you mine at last."

"Circumstances will probably render that impossible."

"Do not talk of circumstances. Give me your promise to be true."

"It does not depend on me. You know it does not."

"But you would give me your promise if it did?"

"I do not know. I have acted under my

mother's guidance," said Estelle, turning herself away from him.

"Ah," Raymond exclaimed, hopefully, "I know your mother will take my side."

"I do not think she will," said Estelle.

During the foregoing conversation Lisette had slipped off to a discreet distance, which, however, did not prevent her keeping her eye on Monsieur Raymond and her mistress. She had thought the love-making on his side the prettiest thing of the kind she had ever seen in her life. Now, fancying that Estelle was looking towards her, as if she wished her nearer, she approached within speaking distance, and said: "Mademoiselle's coffee will be quite cold."

Raymond felt that this was a broad hint for him to take his departure.

"Will you give me a good shake-hands, like the English?" he asked.

"No," Estelle replied, very gravely. She had never given him her hand, even in Mrs. Russell's presence, and his asking for it now only showed what great presumption he could be capable of. As if the fact of his being in her presence now that her mother was away was not a sufficient sin against French etiquette! Talk of Harry, indeed! Why, Monsieur Raymond was behaving tenfold worse. He was transgressing with his eyes open. And to crown all, he must ask her to shake hands with him!

"You never wanted to shake hands when mamma was by," she said with great dignity.

"So why should you now?"

"Because we have had a quarrel, and I hoped we were friends again. Will you shake hands this evening, when your mother is by?"

"I can not promise. This evening may never come, in the sense you mean."

Raymond drew a long breath. "It is cruel of you to remind me of that. You might have given me just a kind word to make me happy all this long day. I did not think I was asking for what seems so totally out of your power. I wish you a good morning, mademoiselle." And he turned away abruptly as he spoke, and walked up the path, leaving Estelle looking after him.

By the time he had disappeared among the bushes that grew near the house she had begun to think that she had been unnecessarily cold and haughty in her behavior. After all, if he did love her, he was not to blame; and though it was contrary to her expectations, it showed that he was better than she had supposed him. He could neither help Julia's running away with Harry nor Madame de Montaignu's considering that the elopement affected the honor of her family. As the top of his hat became invisible, she began to take herself to task for her unkindness, and longed to make amends.

"Monsieur Raymond! Monsieur Raymond!" she cried. Raymond, now at the garden-door, turned back, and saw her running towards him with outstretched hands. He turned and met her half way.

"Don't be angry," she cried; "I did not mean to hurt you—I am sorry if I did. Will you shake hands now?"

She stopped no longer than just to give Raymond time to lift first one hand and then the other to his lips, and then press them tenderly in his own. She turned away quickly, and ran back to where Lisette was standing.

"Oh, Lisette, how could you do such a thing as let him in? What a fuss Mathurine would make if she knew it!"

To which Lisette replied, shrugging her shoulders, that Mathurine could have done no better than she did. Mathurine was one of the most tiresome old maids alive. Could Mathurine herself have taken him by the shoulders and turned him out?

No, Estelle said, but Mathurine would have told him plainly that it was not well for Mademoiselle to receive him; that, in fact, it was contrary to etiquette.

He knew that already, Lisette averred, and much he seemed to care for it. "I believe he is half mad with love," she cried. "Why, mademoiselle, how can you help seeing it by his looks? I declare I wondered to see you so quiet and so cold—with a Yes and a No, and standing up so grand, and looking off straight in front of you. And your wedding fixed for to-morrow! I wouldn't like to marry with such a cold heart as yours, mademoiselle, although you will be dressed so fine." And Lisette departed, quite unconscious of the sting her words contained.

Raymond, not wishing to see his mother till he had well decided on the attitude he had best assume towards her, instead of going home, got his breakfast at a café, and then taking a cab drove to Château Montaignu.

It was late in the afternoon when he returned. As he entered the gateway he was met by his valet, who told him that Madame de Montaignu had been anxiously inquiring for him, and had desired to be told the moment he came in. "Now for a scene!" thought Raymond, as he ascended to the drawing-room, heartily wishing the interview over. "Stay there, I am coming," cried Madame de Montaignu from her dressing-room, where she was giving her maid some directions respecting her dress; and Raymond sat down with some such feeling as comes over a person who is kept waiting by the dentist when he comes by appointment to have a tooth out.

"Well, my son," said Madame, entering, "I have seen Madame Roussel."

"Seen Madame Roussel!"

"Yes; and I am happy to tell you it is all right. As soon as I was dressed I had the carriage out and drove there to inquire. They said madame was away, but was expected home at four o'clock. I asked for the young ladies. They were gone for a drive in the country with Madame Roussel's maid. It appeared that the son had departed the day before for England. This was very satisfactory; still, as I thought it would be best to see Madame Roussel, I said I would return in the afternoon. I went back at half-past four, and found Madame Roussel just returned, terribly fatigued, poor woman, and in great distress at parting from her son. I asked why they had not got him a substitute, as we did for you, instead of letting him enter a service in which a man is in constant danger of being drowned. But it seems that the English prefer being drowned in person rather than by proxy; a fact explained, no doubt, by their splenetic temperament. Madame Roussel had accompanied her son as far as Castel Sarasin, and it was just this and no more which had given rise to that report which alarmed me so. I have told Gracienne that if she brings me any more such tales I shall

dismiss her. After this I shall never venture to depend on what she says."

"Did you see any one besides Madame Roussel?" Raymond asked, scarcely able to suppress a smile.

"I saw Mademoiselle Julie for one moment. She would have called Estelle, but I could not wait. Besides, we shall all meet this evening."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ESTELLE'S LAST APPEAL.

NOT a trace of pallor or fatigue was visible on Mrs. Russell's beautiful face when she received her guests that evening. Julia, too, was as fresh as a rose. How the traces of fatigue were effaced was Mrs. Russell's own secret, unshared even by Mathurine. Certain it was that both ladies had presented a most woe-begone aspect when they descended from the travelling-carriage that afternoon. Mrs. Russell had directed the driver to put them down at the side entrance. They had to drive through back streets to get to it, but she thought it best to avoid the chance of being recognized from any one of the numerous drawing-room windows in the Rue des Couteliers.

There was not a soul in the court when they entered. Mrs. Russell shut the door softly and scudded up stairs as if she were an interloper, followed by Julia.

Madame Fleury and her husband and niece were the only Protestants invited to witness the signing of the contract. Madame would have refused had not her curiosity carried the day against her dignity. For she had felt aggrieved at Mrs. Russell's extreme reticence, and annoyed at having been in the wrong in declaring the report of Estelle's marriage to be a fabrication. But whatever her feelings were, she swallowed them down. For Mathilde was to be married some time that year, and an idea or two might be gained by turning over Mees Estelle's *trousseau*.

Not that Mathilde could expect any thing like this, Madame Fleury confessed with a sigh, as she fingered the Cashmere shawls, and the veil and dress of Alençon lace in which Estelle was to appear on the morrow.

"Ah," said Mademoiselle Mathilde, as she finished a close examination of Estelle's jewel-box, "how delighted you must be to be so rich; to be able to buy just any thing you have a fancy for."

"I know nothing of such delights," said Estelle. "I have always had my allowance like other girls."

"Don't you think," Mademoiselle Mathilde went on, "that it will be very disagreeable to be married in the porch of the cathedral? I feel that is a thing I could never put up with. And which is to be done first, the Protestant marriage or the Catholic? I suppose the civil marriage will be quite early, will it not?"

"There are some people coming in whom I must speak to," said Estelle.

As soon as she was out of hearing, Madame Fleury took her niece to task for her inquisitiveness.

"I wonder at you, Mathilde. Can't you see that she did not like it? You must learn more tact before you will be fit to be at the head of a household. You might have asked me, and I

could have told you that the religious ceremony at the cathedral takes place first. They will have to hurry it over if they get to the Temple by two, which is the hour named in the invitation. It is a pity she is going to marry a Catholic, but we must make the best of it: as dear M. Cazères says, it is wonderful to see how much good may spring from what seems at the time an unmitigated evil. If she converts her husband, it will be such a triumph as the truth has not had for many a long day. Was that the notary who came in last? And did you ever see such a diamond bracelet? or such earrings? Don't they make your mouth water? As for the *trousseau*, I could not have done better myself. Every article is of the best kind. Dear, dear, how I should have liked to make up a match between her and young Anatole de Meissac! But it was not to be. Heaven often denies us the fulfillment of our best desires, as the dear pastor said last Sunday."

"How do you do, Madame Fleury?" said Julia, entering. "You are looking at my friend's pretty things. How do you do, mademoiselle?"

Madame Fleury made a very stately courtesy, and looked at her from head to foot with a curious expression.

"My niece," she said, when she had finished her survey, "we will take a turn in the next room." And taking Mademoiselle Mathilde's arm, she sailed away with as much state as her figure was capable of expressing.

That afternoon madame had been busily employed in taking an inventory of her house-linen, a task which she was too thoroughgoing a housewife to leave to any servant. She was standing in her linen-closet, a small room looking into a back street, and had counted up as far as her hundred and seventeenth linen sheet, when the unusual sound of carriage-wheels drew her to the window. Stretching her neck eagerly, she saw a dusty travelling-carriage stop at the side-entrance of the quadrangle of the Hôtel St. Jean, and, wonder of wonders, from it Mrs. Russell and Miss Maurice alighted, and vanished up the back staircase. Now, in spite of the pitiful ending of her weak little attempt at making a match for Estelle; in spite of Mrs. Russell's having trampled on her feelings; in spite, moreover, of Pastor Cazères's strictures on mixed marriages and his complaints of the English ladies' coldness and spiritual arrogance, Madame Fleury's good-nature rose supreme. She imposed silence on the maid who brought her the report of the scandal, and resolved to hold her own tongue—at least till Estelle was married. But if she could have withered Julia with a look she would have done it. Mathilde, surprised at her aunt's leaving the room so abruptly, whispered a request to be allowed to return and chat with Miss Julia. To which her aunt replied sternly, "You will keep by me," and mounted guard over her till the business of the evening, the reading and signing of the contract, began.

Julia stood and looked after them as they left the room, her eyes dilated, her whole form quivering with passion.

"So she knows it, then! That woman has told her. I felt, when she said that she would keep my secret, that it was a lie. It is well I am going away from this place. I wish I had never come." And she sat down, and laid her cheek on her hand, and thought of how it would

have been if Mrs. Russell had taken the wrong track the night before.

"We should have got a clergyman to marry, us, anyhow, at Pan, I dare say; and we should have been re-married in England to make it all right. I wish we had, only to spite her for all her worrying and lecturing and keeping me in order. And I hate her for telling that horrid fat Madame Fleury. I hate her so that I could kill her," she muttered, clenching her hands. "If I were such an heiress as that silly brute yonder, she would plot and plot and conspire till she had entrapped me into marrying her scatterbrained son. Ah, Mrs. Russell, you had best take care; I may have him at my feet yet!" she said, angrily pushing aside the lace and the shawls that were spread on the sofa.

As she sat she heard the voice of M. Peyre, the notary. The reading of the marriage-contract had begun. There was a profound silence while the reading lasted, then a hum and rustle and pushing about of chairs, as the witnesses drew near to affix their signatures to the document. Presently the pop of corks was heard, and M. Peyre's dry, measured voice, proposing the health of monsieur and mademoiselle, the contracting parties. Julia had expected that, now the reading was over, somebody would have come to fetch her. But it was so evident that she was missed by no one, that she felt she hated them all, from Mrs. Russell down to M. Peyre. And the most hateful thing of all was to be surrounded with evidences of Estelle's riches, while she herself, with all her beauty, was the portionless daughter of a retired admiral.

"She!—little puling idiot, gliding in and out like a ghost—she will never enjoy what her money gives her. She only cares for stupid books and for daubing with paints. Give her a bit of chalk and a few sheets of elephant paper, and she is in paradise for a week. Her very face is only fit for the mourning figure on the top of a tombstone. She won't know how to wear her diamonds, and those lovely Indian shawls will only look like woollen wraps on her miserable little shoulders. As for her wedding-dress, she will look drowned, smothered, in all that lace to-morrow, I know. If it were I—how I would play my lady countess! I'd set off my diamonds! I'd make them set me off, too! They will only put her out. And I—oh, how tired, how tired I am of all this! Every thing is so stupid. It's enough to make one turn goody, like Hen." And she laid her head on her arm, and wept, she scarce knew why.

A soft hand on her shoulder made her look up. It was Estelle. She dashed the tears from her eyelashes. It was not often that she wept, even in self-pity; and she hated that Estelle should find her in a melting mood, and think, perhaps, that she was regretting Harry, for whom she did not care two straws.

"You are tired, dear," Estelle said, sitting down beside her. "You should not have come into the drawing-room to-night. It was too much for you after—after all that fatigue."

"It is not only that—I am sick and tired of every thing and every body. It is all stupid, and hateful, and hollow. I am sick and tired of the world!" Julia exclaimed vehemently.

"Oh, Julia," Estelle said, sighing; "so am I; very, very tired of it."

"You tired of the world?" Julia asked, point-

ing to the table on which all the jewels and presents were laid out. "You tired of the world, when you can call this your own—and this—and this—" she said, taking up the lace and other finery that lay in a heap near her. "And with the prospect of being a countess instead of plain Miss Russell! Only a French countess, to be sure; but then, your father was only a captain in the navy. I don't believe you mean what you say, Estelle."

"Oh," Estelle replied, "if I could only be told that I never should wear that finery—never be countess—be only plain Estelle Russell all my life—how thankfully should I say my prayers to-night!" And she began to weep silently, hiding her face in her hands.

"Now, for Heaven's sake, don't begin to cry!" said Julia, equally alarmed and annoyed. "I tell you my nerves won't bear a scene to-night, Estelle. And you know that when once you do begin you can't leave off."

"I am sorry—" Estelle began, endeavoring to check herself. Julia went on:

"It's too bad of you! I am so tired, and so worried, and so put out, that I'm sure I don't want to have people crying where I am. It is I who have the greatest right to cry, I think, not you, who have every thing this world can give you. As for me, I tell you I am so sick of every thing and every body, and so worn out with fatigue, that I wish I were dead. There!"

"I am sorry for you, Julia, indeed I am. And if I cried about myself just now, don't think, because of that, that I have not cared about your annoyances. I am very sorry for what you have gone through." She could not say she was sorry the marriage had not taken place. "You are certainly looking worn-out and unlike yourself," she continued. "If you will let me, I will help you to undress. Why should you sit up till the people are gone? You will feel better when you are in bed." And Julia, being really exhausted, suffered Estelle to do as she proposed.

When Estelle returned to the drawing-room, every one was gone except M. de Luzarches and his wife, and Madame de Montaigu and her son.

"Here is the truant," cried madame. "Raymond has been complaining that you have been kept away from him all the evening."

"I have just learnt from Monsieur Alfred," said Raymond, coming forward, "that it is your eighteenth birthday to-day, mademoiselle."

"Yes," Estelle replied, blushing somewhat as she explained that she did not keep her birthday, but her name-day, as every one did in France.

Raymond went up to Mrs. Russell, and, observing that birthdays only came once a year, begged her permission to embrace mademoiselle, in honor of the day. Mrs. Russell graciously assented, and he approached Estelle, and with the words, "With your mother's permission, mademoiselle," would have kissed her on the forehead. But she, crying wildly, "No, no, no," broke away and fled to her own room, leaving her future husband much discomfited, and the spectators much amused. Mrs. Russell, alone, concealed some annoyance under her smile.

M. de Luzarches laughed heartily. "I think it will be no use to wait for her to come back." Then there was a great deal of bowing and courtesying and kissing; and her last guests

having departed, Mrs. Russell was free to seek repose.

While Mathurine was undressing her, Estelle came in with her eyes swollen and her face disfigured with weeping. Mrs. Russell asked her sharply why she was not in bed. "You won't be fit to be seen to-morrow," she remarked.

"I can not go to bed till I have spoken to you, mamma," said the girl huskily. "Will you please send Mathurine away for one moment?"

"Send Mathurine away?" Mrs. Russell repeated. "Certainly not. I am so tired that I can scarcely lift a finger. If I were not so tired I should scold you well for making such an absurd scene this evening. Do go to bed; and endeavor to behave rationally to-morrow."

"Mamma, it is about to-morrow that I want to speak. Dear mamma—" she knelt down and put her hands together on her mother's knee—"do not make me marry Monsieur Raymond. I feel I can not do it."

"Is the child mad?" asked Mrs. Russell, as she looked at Estelle kneeling before her.

"No, I am not mad now. I was when I thought I could marry him—when I thought I could marry any one except Louis. From the day the marriage was fixed to this, I declare I have never willingly thought of Louis. You chose Monsieur Raymond, and on Monsieur Raymond I have forced myself by every possible means in my power to look as on my future husband. I thought that a strong will would do every thing. But I was mistaken. If Louis were here; if he only beckoned me with his finger, I would go to him, follow him, be his wife—yes, in spite of that poverty you have taught me to fear so much; in spite—I would not listen to any thing you could say, if Louis only told me to come with him. Even though you should cast me off, I would not care!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," was Mrs. Russell's reply. "How dare you talk in this improper way? You are almost as bad as Julia. Get up from the carpet instantly!"

"Mamma," said Estelle as she rose, "if I marry Monsieur Raymond, the whole of my life will be an acted lie."

"Don't talk in that crazy manner," Mrs. Russell said; "but just look at the clock. Don't you see that it is actually your wedding-day? What would people say of me if it were broken off now?"

"Tell Monsieur Raymond that I love Louis Vivian with my whole heart and soul, and he will release me," cried Estelle. "I would have told him myself, only I have been such a coward. Once married; how can I dare tell him? Help me in this, mamma, for pity's sake! Do not force me to do him such a terrible wrong. If he did not love me it would not matter so much, but he does love me. And when he finds out that I do not love him—that his wife loves some one else—I tremble to think how he will hate me then!"

"I am weary of all this nonsense," Mrs. Russell exclaimed, throwing herself back in her chair. "Monsieur Raymond would be the very last person to whom I should mention your silly fancy for Mr. Vivian. But for your perverseness you would have got over it long ago. I wonder how you could think for one moment that I should consent to compromise myself as

you propose, and to be cut by every one of the Montaigu set. I hope that before long you will feel thoroughly ashamed of all you have been saying to-night, and thankful to me for not letting you have your own way."

"Then you will not tell him?"

"No, I certainly will not. And now I beg you will go away and not worry me any more."

Estelle wept that night till she could weep no longer. She had gone to her mother with a hope—a poor, faint hope, but still a hope—of being listened to. But now not even this poor, faint hope remained; her entreaties had availed no more against her mother's firmness than the spray which dashes against the rock.

"Oh," she cried out wildly, "Louis, Louis, come and take me away!" And then, remembering how her mother had written to him, "No, he has given me up. He has given me up, and nothing in the world will help me now!" And she fell asleep, praying that she might die.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHATEAU MONTAIGU.

NEVER during the whole course of his ministry had Pastor Cazères received such a rebuff as on the day when his evil genius prompted him to call on Mrs. Russell, and warn her solemnly against endangering her child's soul by allowing this marriage with a Catholic. That recalcitrant member of his flock had refused even to listen to what he had to say. She had interrupted him in the midst of his carefully prepared exordium, assuring him, in terms of politeness as incisive as the French language could make them, that she felt herself capable of managing both her own and her daughter's affairs without extraneous aid, either temporal or spiritual. And then, as if he had been any common morning caller, she began a frivolous discussion on the merits of the azaleas and rhododendrons at the flower-show which had been occupying all Toulouse that week. Foiled in the object of his visit, the pastor took leave, bearing away wrath and bitterness in his heart against the proud Englishwoman who dared so utterly to ignore his ghostly authority.

And truly a more amiable man than Pastor Cazères might have felt ruffled. But Pastor Cazères, more than any man. For he, when he paid his pastoral visits, had been wont to make his arm-chair a pulpit, whence he delivered sentences of grave import; rebuking, commending, or warning, according to the spiritual needs of his auditors. Woe to the woman who ventured to turn the monologue into a dialogue! Reproof would have followed quick upon the transgression. M. Cazères would have told her that she was speaking "as one of the foolish women speaketh," and would have put her to such utter confusion that she would have held her peace for evermore. But this woman, blind and foolish, and laden with sinfulness—this elegant, arrogant Englishwoman, with a wave of her dainty fan, had bid him euphoniously to hold his tongue; him, the messenger from Heaven, the delight of the Toulousan faithful! He had retained sufficient self-control to recommend the unfortunate Estelle to the Divine protection, and to assure her misguided mother that he would not forget

her in his prayers—for which Mrs. Russell had thanked him with her most ceremonious courtesy; and then he had departed, full of righteous anger, the outpouring of which fell to the lot of his meek, overworked helpmate, and spoilt her appetite for that day's dinner.

I think that both bride and bridegroom would have fared badly at this pastor's hands had he pronounced the pastoral benediction over them. It would have been his awful duty to affix an anathema to the nuptial discourse, both for the good of the two souls more immediately concerned, and to deter his auditors from the perils of mixed marriages.

Offended as Mrs. Russell was, she would have desired that Sub-pastor Vinel might officiate, had not her pride stepped in and whispered that such a course would assure Pastor Cazères of his words having taken some root, and that he would thereby be greatly magnified in his own estimation. So she let things remain as they were, trusting to chance for a turning aside of the sharp arrows of the pastor's tongue. And chance interfered, in the shape of some pastoral business which called M. Cazères away to Nismes at the eleventh hour, leaving Sub-pastor Vinel, a raw-boned, ill-favored youth, horribly ascetic, a red-hot importation from the college at Geneva, to pronounce the marriage homily.

"*Que la femme soit soumise*,"—"Let the wife be in subjection," was the text M. Vinel chose, and so fruitful a theme was it to him, that he was enabled to enlarge upon it for the space of one hour and a half by the clock of the capitol.

Raymond, who had at first behaved admirably, felt his patience waning by the time M. Vinel had reached his "seventhly." Nevertheless, that the exhortation came to an end without an "eighthly" was not owing to the bridegroom's look of weariness, but to the fact that M. Vinel's throat was getting dry, and that the sacristan had omitted to place the customary glass of water on the communion-table. The last quarter of an hour, from the "seventhly," that is, to the final benediction, was an awful quarter of an hour to Raymond; and not the least part of its awfulness consisted in the pastoral gift of a big brown Bible, which, when put in his hands, he knew no more what to do with than if it had been a baby.

Madame de Montaigu being of opinion that it was exceedingly improper for two young people to go rushing about the country the instant they were married, it had been decided that the honeymoon was to be spent at the château. Madame would have wished to give a ball at her house in town on the wedding-night, but Raymond, finding from Mrs. Russell that this idea was extremely distasteful to Estelle, had stipulated that the ball was to be put off for a fortnight after the wedding, and that during that time he and his wife should remain in seclusion at the château.

It was a wonderful change in both their lives; to Raymond almost more so than to Estelle. He thought of the day before their wedding-day with a sort of feeling that it had been a horrible nightmare, in which all sorts of strange and foolish terrors had possessed him, and all sorts of cruel and impossible events had been constantly going to happen. How little would it have taken to make that nightmare a reality! Supposing Mrs. Russell not to have returned when she did; supposing Madame de Montaigu had felt less secure

in her own acuteness; supposing a slip of the tongue on the part of any of Mrs. Russell's servants when she made her inquiries; supposing any one of these chances, how would he have been situated now? If Chance had been worshipped in France, Raymond would have laid a tribute on her altar. But that deity having no visible altars nowadays, his tribute was necessarily confined to a vague, unaccustomed feeling of gratitude to the thing—Chance—Luck—fortuitous combination of circumstances—God's Providence, some men call it—which, instead of thwarting and torturing him, had given him the desire of his eyes, and completed what had hitherto been at its best a low, imperfect state of existence. They were in Eden now; Eden without its serpent. Madame de Montaigu might personate the serpent; but madame had promised them a quiet fortnight, and it was to be hoped that she would let them have their Eden just for so long. Very delightful were Raymond's wanderings through the woods, and vineyards, and gardens, with the creature by his side from whom no power could part him, not even the whole force of united family conclave, presided over by Madame de Montaigu. That beautiful head, with its coronet of brown, gold-tipped hair, was his to caress unchidden. Those sacred lips, his own property, to kiss without stint or check. No duenna bristling with proprieties could come between them now. They were one and indivisible.

And Estelle?

Estelle was astounded to find that the change was not so bad as she had expected. You see that she had all at once got rid of a great many things which worried her. In the first place, instead of being ordered and looked after and scolded for her good, she was asked a hundred times a day what her wishes were; and this, besides being a new thing, was in itself delightful. Then, too, there was nothing at Château Montaigu to remind her of Louis Vivian. She had burnt the sandal-wood box and all its contents, except the locket in which was her father's hair. She had even erased a marginal note which Louis had made when reading her "Froissart's Chronicles." And to crown all this, there was Raymond, clever, talented, as she was beginning to find out; elegant and handsome, as she had seen long ago; and lavishing his love upon her in a manner she had never even dreamt of. No woman, even the most cold-hearted, can be quite insensible to a man's devotion. Estelle was so far touched by it that she was content already to let herself be loved. If Louis had not given her up— But he had done so, and since it was so, she felt that she would hardly like to change her husband and Château Montaigu for the Hôtel St. Jean and the stern guardianship of her mother.

The Montaigu estate was spread over that broad tongue of land which lies north-east of Toulouse, between the brawling river Ers and the Grand Canal du Midi. Northward was a vast wood; south and west the estate was divided into vineyards and maize fields. The rest was a mere waste of sandy hillocks and pebbly drifts, inundated by the river in spring, and covered in summer and autumn by wild lavender and periwinkle and privet bushes. Behind this waste land there was an embankment which separated the cultivated portion from the waste, and kept the torrent

from spreading over the low fields in times of inundation.

On the highest point of this little territory, overlooking the old city with its tiled roofs, and the plain with its endless vineyards and maize fields, stood the melancholy château, cradle of the proud, overbearing, once powerful Sires de Montaigu. The remains of graceful arabesques might still be discerned on its battered brick façade; whose decay had been due not so much to the hand of time as to the ruthless zeal of a patriotic Toulousan mob during the Reign of Terror. Approaching by an avenue of ancient elms for about half a mile, you reached a Gothic lichen-stained portal, surmounted by an oriel window, which, for reasons best known to the architect, was placed somewhat out of the line of the centre of the portal, which itself stood considerably on one side of the façade. After passing the entrance, you got through a vaulted passage into the court, with a cloister on the east side something like that in the old convent of the Augustine friars at Toulouse, now converted to secular uses. Along this cloister a Banksia rose grew unchecked, throwing its wildly luxuriant branches round the pillars and up to the roof, and carpeting the pavement all through the month of April with its fragrant petals. At one end of the cloister an oak door, half off its hinges, gave entrance to a small chapel with a groined roof, communicating with the interior of the house by a disused room in the last stage of mouldiness, yclept the library. On the right, a winding staircase of stone led to a suite of rooms on the first floor, set apart for the residence of the countesses dowager of Montaigu. But for more than half a century there had been no countess dowager, and the untenanted apartments, uncared for by French housemaids, and delivered over by them to the dominion of the spider and the moth, had gradually fallen into decay; and would have remained in that condition had they not been selected by Raymond as a residence for himself and his wife during his father's lifetime.

The apartments of the comte and comtesse were on the ground-floor at the other end of the building, that which was least picturesque and best repaired. The Montaigu family had had its ups and downs in the world, and the château bore marks of its share in the buffettings of fortune. The last injuries to its structure had been those inflicted during the battle of Toulouse, on Easter Sunday, April, 1814, when the western wall had been riddled with shot; while the summer-drawing-room, with its frescoed walls and yellow silken hangings, was turned into a slaughter-house by the British, who occupied the château and the neighboring farm.

When the family returned after the proclamation of peace, it was to find the château desolate, the young crops of maize and wheat on the estate and outlying farms cut to pieces, and the well-trimmed, tufty vines trampled under foot. More than that, the ground was one vast cemetery, for the loss of the British had been severe; and often in his rounds did the gamekeeper come upon a spot where the earth was elastic to the tread; sure sign that a corpse lay under, buried hastily where it had given up the ghost. These had been collected and re-interred in a lonely spot a mile distant from the château, where the river made a bend, and the willows swept their trailing boughs

in the snow-fed waters as they rushed along. The superstitious peasants avoided that spot; even the poacher was scared from it by the dread of meeting the restless souls of those who lay as they had died, unconfessed and unshriven. So the wood-pigeons built unmolested in the beeches, and the hares and pheasants had the ground all to themselves, and grew and multiplied. The master of the château was half-ruined for the time, and the château itself was no safe place to live in, for malaria reigned around it, only to be dislodged by winter winds and purifying rain.

But the Comte de Montaigu, though low in purse, did not lose heart. There was an infallible plan, consecrated from time immemorial, whereby the Sires de Montaigu had renovated their drained purses; namely, by prudent alliances. So the comte assembled the family council, composed at that time solely of a younger brother and an ancient aunt; and after declaring that he intended to sacrifice himself for the good of his estate by putting his neck under the matrimonial yoke, solemnly confided to the ancient aunt the task of unearthing the future countess; adding that, himself once supplied as became the head of the family, he should make a point of finding a proper wife for his brother.

The aunt set to work in a methodical manner. She made a tour of inspection through all the convents devoted to the education of noble young ladies. At the convent of the ladies of the Sacred Heart, the mother-superior recommended as a desirable article in every way, a girl of fifteen, Octavie de Brucilh by name, a pretty Bayonnaise, with immense estates in the Basque country, neither father nor mother, and a guardian who had expressed in strong terms his wish to be relieved from his tutorial responsibilities. As for Mademoiselle Octavie herself, she was dying for a glimpse of the unknown world beyond the barred convent windows.

Chaperoned by the mother-superior, and further protected by the intervening grating, the convent-bred young lady had an interview of about ten minutes' duration with the Comte de Montaigu in the parlor. On his return from this interview, the comte, who had chosen to see for himself that Mademoiselle Octavie had neither a hump nor a squint, signified to his ancient relative that he was perfectly satisfied, and should immediately proceed to communicate with the guardian. Matters were arranged without loss of time; a new altar-cloth was presented to the convent chapel by mademoiselle, and a new set of brocade vestments by monsieur; she kissed the nuns all round, and promised eternal friendship to her schoolfellows; he gave a champagne supper to a host of bachelor friends; and they were married, she being fifteen, he five-and-thirty. The matrimonial yoke had not weighed heavily on either of them. He had gone his way, she had gone hers. Her way, taking it all in all, had been no worse than frivolous. Of his way little need be said. He had had a paralytic stroke some time before our story begins, and was occupied in making his salvation with all possible speed before a second should overtake him. His brother, as well as the ancient aunt, were long since dead, and Raymond was emphatically the sole hope of the family in the direct line.

Raymond, all desirous of making his wife retract certain heretical utterances respecting French

poetry, had begun a judicious course of reading with her. They sat together early one morning under the walnut-trees, she idly listening, and drinking in the dewy air with a still new sense of freedom, while he read the Gascon poem, "*La Françonnetou*," translating as he went on. And as he read, he glanced at her, and rejoiced ere long to see that her beautiful gray eyes were veiled with a tender mist, and that a rosy flush had stained the pale marble of her cheek. By-and-by her mouth began to quiver. Then he stopped; and she, stifling her emotion, said, turning her head that he might not see her wet eyelids:

"That is beautiful. But it does not sound like French, it is so perfectly untrammelled. What must the original Gascon be, if the translation is so charming?"

"I know Gascon pretty well," said Raymond. "I can teach it to you some day, if you like."

"Yes, indeed," said Estelle; "I should like it, if you don't mind the trouble; just for the sake of reading such delicious poetry."

"Delicious poetry!" laughed her husband. "I have soon converted you, my love."

"I have not altered my opinion of Racine in the least," she retorted, blushing. "And after all, it is Gascon, not French, this '*Françonnetou*.'"

"But you liked the translation," said he; "you said you did, and I shall not let you go back from your word."

"Yes, I liked the translation very much indeed. Who is it by?"

"A man I know something of," was his answer. "And now, if you like, dearest, we will explore a little. Let us walk."

In the midst of the wood, hidden in a clump of young beeches and acacias, in whose branches the blackbirds were singing lustily, stood a broken column, with its pedestal half sunk in the earth, and bearing inscriptions which damp and decay had rendered almost illegible. Every crack and crevice in the shattered marble was filled up by the delicate, shade-loving maidenhair, that drooped and waved its bright pinnules with each breath of wind. On the ground at its base, embedded in luxuriant mosses and ferns, lay the funeral urn which had originally adorned the summit of the column. The earth all round was overrun with wild flowers and velvety mosses, strewn with tender little pizizas, no bigger than coral beads, so fragile that they crumbled under Estelle's fingers when she tried to gather them.

"This is the sweetest spot I ever saw!" she cried with enthusiasm.

Raymond, seeing his wife pleased, was pleased too; and, sitting down at the foot of the monument, told her how it had been raised to the memory of the British officers who had fallen on the field of Toulouse. Many details he gave which he had learnt from his father and the old people on the estate, and which, though possessing local interest, were not to be found in French memoirs of that battle.

"This place is dull," he said, at last, seeing that his wife gave a shudder. "Let us leave it. I have always been accustomed to it, but I can understand your not liking it, now you know it to be a cemetery."

"It seems to me redolent of death," said Estelle, glad to move away. "Even the acacias do not smell as they do near the house."

"Was it that which made you shudder?"

"No, it was a sort of inward shiver, as if somebody had been walking over my grave, as the country-folk say in England."

"Do not say such horrible things," said Raymond, "else you will make me shudder too." They walked on, and Estelle began expressing her surprise at the ruinous condition of the monument.

"The fact is," Raymond answered, "that ever since its erection, whenever there has been any political disturbance—and you know there has been a good deal, one way and another, since your brave *Wellington* passed here—the mob have made a practice of coming out here and battering the monument. I can not quite tell why they should take such a long walk when there is so much in the town itself that they might break to pieces. They do so probably in obedience to some occult law with which we are as yet unacquainted. If you wish, I will have the stone repaired. I dare say we shall not have a revolution these ten years, whatever the Reds may say about it."

"No," Estelle answered; "I would not do away with the maidenhair and the moss, which have so tenderly covered up the rents and crevices all these years."

"This evening," said Raymond, as they sat together on the sofa after luncheon, "we will have a ride together. I have got you a beautiful little Arab that will just suit you."

"How kind you are!" said Estelle. "I was wishing for an Arab the other day."

"Now you have got it, begin to wish for something else."

"I will wait till to-morrow," said she, "I don't quite know what I wish for just at present. Raymond," she said, shyly, after they had sat silent for some time, "did you like the way the table was arranged at luncheon?"

"I thought it a great improvement," said he, "and so was the luncheon itself. Our cook is on his mettle to-day, evidently."

"It was I who ordered every thing," cried Estelle, delighted. "Every thing, the arrangement of the table included. I am so glad you liked it."

Raymond looked surprised and pleased. "I believe you can do every thing," he said. "Not a day passes but I discover some new accomplishment of which I had no idea. My mother will take you to her inmost heart when she finds out what a capital housewife you are. She is a clever housewife herself, and piques herself on her talents in that line; as for book-learning, I may as well tell you at once as leave you to find out, that if you said that Homer lived in the time of Charlemagne, or that the Tower of Babel was built in the time of the Romans, she would believe you; and if I said it was just the contrary, she would think that probably I was in the right, but that after all it did not much matter. You must never let her see you with a book if you can help it; the only two books she looks into herself are the Book of Hours, and the fashion-book. She has never found out the want of any more; and if she has got through the world so well with those two, why, she will ask you, should any woman want more? Such is her creed. She is never so angry with me as when she finds out that I have been buying books."

"I wonder what she will say by-and-by, when she sees the quantity we have in our drawing-room."

"She will want you to put them all away; and if you don't she will treasure up your refusal in her mind, and go on adding one small offense and another to it, till she considers the list long enough to justify a quarrel."

"Oh, Raymond! You don't quite mean that."

"Indeed I do. You don't know what awful quarrels we have had sometimes because I would not do exactly as she wished. Then she never would let me alone. It seemed as if I were my own master, and certainly I had my own servant and set of rooms, and could go in and out as I chose, and I need not even dine with my parents unless I liked. But there my freedom ended. I do believe, Estelle, that if she had taken it into her head that I ought to button my coat behind instead of before, she would never have left off worrying me till I had done it. She was sulky with me for days because I would have our rooms furnished as you see them. But in that matter I held firm, because I did think it time for her despotism to stop somewhere. Of course, now I am married, I shall take my own way. It is to be hoped that she too will feel that she has less right to interfere, now that I have a wife."

"Then you do not wish me to have the books removed?"

"Certainly not. If she says any thing, you must say I will not have them put away."

"But if she gets angry?"

"Then she must. I shall know how to manage her. Who can this be?" he exclaimed, hearing the sound of a carriage coming up the avenue. He went to the window, and returned with annoyance depicted on his countenance. "Talk of the wolf," he said, "and one sees his tail. Estelle, it is my mother."

"But I thought it was settled that we were to have a fortnight to ourselves?"

"Of course it was. And I shall ask her what has made her break her promise."

"But perhaps she wanted to give some orders about her own rooms. Perhaps she will be gone again in half an hour," said Estelle.

Raymond looked out again. "No such luck," he said. "My father's valet is sitting on the box; *ergo*, my father is inside. It is too bad."

Madame's voice was soon heard in the court. She was finding fault with somebody, it was clear.

"Finished luncheon! I never heard of such a thing in my life. I should like to know what makes them so early. It is extremely annoying and inconvenient. Baptiste, give monsieur your arm. Oh, what an ascent! Thank Heaven I don't live up stairs."

"I do indeed thank Heaven," said Raymond, turning up his eyes to the ceiling.

Estelle began to laugh, in spite of feeling some nervousness at the impending visit.

"You may laugh," said Raymond, "but it is no laughing matter. People have no business to break their promises."

"Had I not better go forward and meet her?" said Estelle, moving to the door.

"Certainly not!" For the first time she detected displeasure in her husband's tone. "I

beg you won't move an inch. I am not glad to see her, and I have no intention of getting up even a show of welcome."

"Good-morning, children!" said madame, as she entered. "How do, little one?" This was addressed to her daughter-in-law, as she just touched her cheek. "You did not expect me, I suppose," was the next thing she said, as she threw herself on the sofa and unfastened her bonnet-strings.

"We certainly did not expect you," Raymond answered.

"The fact is, it was getting so hot in Toulouse that I could not stay there a moment longer. I thought we should be here in time for luncheon, and so we should, only you are so ridiculously early. What made you change our usual hour, eh?"

"Perhaps we wanted luncheon early because we breakfasted early."

"But what on earth induced you to breakfast early?"

"Because we got up early, I suppose?"

"But what on earth made you get up?"

"Because there happened to be something worth getting up for."

"Will you come into my room and lay aside your bonnet and shawl?" Estelle asked at this juncture.

"No," the comtesse replied; "I would as soon stay where I am. I suppose they will give us something to eat presently. I gave orders about it before I came up stairs. You are looking rather pretty, I think. Have you and Raymond quarrelled yet?"

"Quarrelled!" Estelle drew herself up indignantly.

"Just look at her!" cried Madame de Montaignu to her husband, who had nodded all round on entering the room, and then dropped into an arm-chair without a word. "Just note that air of offended majesty! You would manage it pretty well if you were my height, but as you are not, I wouldn't try it if I were you. Well, well, so there has been no quarrelling yet. You will come to it soon enough, never fear."

"I trust I shall never so far forget myself," said Estelle.

"I won't begin," said Raymond, drawing his wife close to him.

"Montaignu," cried the comtesse, "don't go to sleep. You will have your luncheon presently, and you shall sleep by-and-by. Raymond, give your father a push. It is very bad for him to sleep so much."

"I wish you would let me alone," said the old gentleman, peevishly. "The heat is very oppressive, and I have not a pinch of snuff left."

"Where did you get that morning-gown?" was madame's next inquiry.

"Mamma had it sent from Paris. Raymond thinks it pretty."

"Raymond knows nothing about it. I don't like the cut of it at all; I hope you have no more of that pattern."

"Indeed I have. Mamma had a great fancy for the pattern. It came from the best house in Paris."

"I don't believe it did. You were imposed on, I dare say. You must have them altered. I will lend you a pattern from my Paris dress-maker's."

"I won't have them altered," "I like them as they are," said Estelle and Raymond together.

Further discussion was cut short by the entrance of a servant to say that madame was served.

"What did I tell you?" said Raymond, as his parents left the room. "Is she not awful?"

"What shall we do if she intends always going on like this?" Estelle asked with a sinking heart.

"I would not mind it so much if she would only let you alone," said Raymond, angrily. "I wish we were a hundred miles away from her. I'll tell you what we will do. We will have the pony-carriage, and drive out as far as the beech wood. You can take your drawing-book, there are plenty of nice old trees to study, and I will translate some more of Jasmin's poetry for you."

But before they could put their project into execution, a message came that madame wanted Monsieur Raymond immediately.

While waiting for him to come back, Estelle took up the book of Jasmin's poetry, and tried to read it, but, finding the Gascon verbs puzzling, she laid it down, and went into the book-room to look for a translation which Raymond had said he possessed. She found the book, read a few pages, and then turned to the title-page to learn the translator's name. Suddenly a bright smile broke over her face. The name was "Raymond de Montaignu."

"I like his poetry better than Racine's, whatever he may say about it," she thought; "but this is only a translation, after all. I wonder whether he has ever printed any original poems." She began to search through the shelves, and by-and-by came upon a small volume in a modest brown cover, which, though only bearing initials, convinced her of Raymond being the author, from the notes and emendations in his handwriting. Straightway she plunged into it, and so absorbed and delighted was she at the evidence of real talent in it, that a knock at the door had to be repeated before she cried "Come in."

Lisette entered, with a contrite face.

"I hope madame will pardon me," she began.

"What is the matter, Lisette?" You haven't been breaking my scent-bottles, I hope?"

"Not so bad as that, madame. But I hope madame will pardon me, considering how it occurred. I am desolated about it."

"I don't know what it is yet," said her mistress, good-humoredly.

The fact was, Lisette began volubly, that she had lost her head; and goodness knew it was enough to make any one distracted, what with the packing, and Mathurine's eternal fault-finding, like the clack of a mill. And it was on the night before the wedding, when she had so much to do she didn't know what to be at first. And she was just going to bring madame—made-moiselle—the letter—and all the bonnets came at the same moment, and she stopped to pack them and get them out of the way, and *voilà!* the letter was forgotten, and had lain in her apron-pocket ever since.

"Letter! what letter?" asked her mistress, flushing anxiously.

"I entreat madame to overlook the negligence," said Lisette, getting ready to cry. "I beg madame to believe it was accidental. I put the letter in my apron-pocket, really, to keep it safe; there

was such a litter of things about ; so much being sent in at the last moment, just like those tradespeople. And the letter would have been forgotten till next year, if Madame la Comtesse's maid had not desired me to get my things ready, as madame proposed having the half-yearly wash and the bleaching in a day or two. *Voilà !*" And she put a crumpled letter into Madame Raymond's hand.

Estelle started, and turned pale.

"Madame is not angry ? Ah, if madame only knew what I went through in packing her boxes, with that tiresome old Mathurine always at my heels !"

"You could not help it," said Estelle quietly.

"That will do, Lisette. You can go."

"Madame is not angry ?" asked Lisette doubtfully, lingering in the doorway.

"No. I see you could not help it. Go."

And Lisette departed, murmuring that madame was very good. Estelle sat perfectly still, with her hand to her head staring at the crumpled letter with a look of painful bewilderment, which by-and-by shaped itself thus in words :

"I made sure he would be too proud to write again after he had been rejected with scorn, as I know he was. I should have been, I think. But I should have known him better than to judge him so. Did he not say he would love me all his life ? Oh, my God ! I wish I were dead, I wish I were dead !" And then she began to moan and sob, but softly, lest her husband should come in.

"I ought to burn this without reading it," she thought ; "but I must know what he says. He has a right to be heard. My own Louis, whom I did love so dearly !"

The letter ran thus :

"Estelle, I can not believe that this rejection of me, conveyed through your mother, is of your own free-will. Until I hear from you to the contrary, I shall consider your answer as the result of mere coercion, or, to use a less harsh term, as the consequence of a weak coincidence in your mother's wishes. Since I saw you last at Cauterets, I have worked harder than ever I did in my life—I have strained every nerve, buoyed up by the hope of calling you mine one day. That day may be distant, but I do see it now. I should not dare say so much, did I not feel so convinced that your love for me, like mine for you, is of a nature not to be worn-out by long waiting. If I must be rejected, Estelle, let my doom fall on me from your hands alone. I shall bear it best from you. But if, indeed, you love me still, for God's sake let no mother come between us two. Consider yourself and me for a little space, and forget that there are other people in the world. I know your sweet submissiveness, your entire self-forgetfulness ; but, my love, if you are my love, I crave to be remembered. I say again, let no other come between us two.

"Think once—if you have forgotten, I have not—of those pleasant hours we spent on the mountain-side. Must I recall them to you ? Every stone, every rock, every tint in the mountain gorge, is before me now. I can see you, as you sat, watching the last sunset we looked on together. The sun went down behind the mountain in front of us, and the red gleam on the snow died away. The evening breeze sprang up, and blew

your hair about, and I lay on the rock overhanging the tumbling Gave, and thought you looked like a Madonna, and fell down and worshipped you in my heart. Have you forgotten that evening ? Have you forgotten what we said to each other amid the rush of the noisy waters ?

"Write to me with your own hand, Estelle. Write what your own heart tells you.

"My love ! my beautiful one ! my star ! I have perfect faith in you. Adieu."

* * * * *

When Raymond came back, half an hour later, he found his wife lying on the floor unconscious. He took her up and carried her to her room, and then rang for her maid, and applied eau-de-cologne till she came. He was not much frightened. His mother was in the habit of having nervous attacks and fainting-fits, particularly when she had been thwarted in her plans. But madame was generally restored in a few minutes, and Lisette exhausted all her simple remedies, and still Estelle gave no sign.

Then he became alarmed, and desired Lisette to tell one of the men to ride into town for a doctor. Lisette went, looking very frightened, and an instant after, Madame la Comtesse appeared, to give the benefit of her experience.

"It is nothing at all ; just a fainting-fit," she said, raising the girl's eyelid with her finger.

"What are you about ? Do pray leave her alone," exclaimed her son, disgusted at her coolness.

"That's how one sees whether they are in a dead faint," said madame, knowingly. And then she went on to make sage remarks on the imprudence of getting up early, and lacing tight in the morning, and sitting in rooms filled with the perfume of acacias and roses. Lisette came back just then, and was ordered forthwith to shut the windows.

"She is all right now," said madame by-and-by, when Estelle opened her eyes and looked round her. "I told you it was a simple fainting-fit. Now, Raymond, it is no good to talk to her, you will send her off again. It is all stuff and nonsense having a doctor. I shall give her a glass of liqueur, and in half an hour she will be as well as ever she was in her life." And madame trotted off, and left the husband and wife alone.

"Art thou better, indeed, *ma mignonne*, my darling ?" he asked, in a voice that fell on her ear tender as summer rain after her mother-in-law's sharp accents.

She moved her head in reply. She could not trust herself to speak yet ; partly because she was so sorry for him—for all his love thrown away on her. It seemed such a dreadful pity. So little of real, strong love as there was in this world, and to throw it away ! Had she never seen Louis, she would have made this love the crowning joy of her life : she would have basked willingly in its hot sunshine all her days. Her instinct told her that it was a love that would never grow cold as long as the impetuous husband-heart beat. And now, what might have been her glory and her shelter was nothing but a terror and an oppression. If she only might be let alone, and dare think of Louis ! Madame de Montaign might have made another irruption into her daughter-in-law's room, and treated the young married people to more sage remarks, had not a hindrance occurred in the shape of a visit from

the new curé. So she contented herself with sending up the liqueur-stand, with directions that Madame Raymond was to drink of a certain liqueur; and retired with the new curé to her own private room, proposing to enlighten him as to the method he was to take for performing the important work assigned him on coming to the parish.

Raymond, glad of any chance that kept Madame down stairs, obeyed her directions as to the liqueur, and supported his wife with his strong arm while she drank it, wondering what should make her shiver and tremble so. She, all the while, was longing to be alone; longing to turn her face to the wall, and weep silently for the love she dared not cherish: the love that would never die—that would stand knocking at the door of her heart of hearts all her life long, crying to be let in.

She knew that Louis Vivian's letter must have dropped from her hand while Raymond was laying her on her bed, for she could see it nowhere. It must be found and destroyed. The fear of her husband's picking it up brought back her strength. More than ever did she long to be alone. And yet there seemed no hope of his going, and she dared not vex him by bidding him go. How should she escape from the clasp of that strong arm, which seemed as if it would never be tired of holding her?

"The window has been shut," she said. "Will you open it, please, Raymond?"

And then, as soon as his back was turned, she slipped down and stood on the floor, peering round stealthily for the letter, which might be under a chair or table. Raymond stooped as he turned, and picked up something.

"Is it right for you to get up?" said he, seeing she had risen. She looked at him as he spoke, and her eyes dilated with fear. He had found the letter. Madame's trailing skirts had swept it over to the window. What would he do with it? she thought. Would he read it? She had an idea that husbands had a right—or believed they had—to read their wives' letters.

"Is this yours?" he asked, smoothing the paper and holding it out to her.

She longed to clutch it from him.

"Yes," she said, forcing herself to speak quietly; "it is an English letter I had this morning—just now. Do you wish to read it?"

The last words flashed out defiantly. She thought he looked as if he wished—as if he were going to read it. She stood leaning on a chair. A strange mingling of hope with the fear came and took her breath away. She wished he would read it now; read, and then rage and storm at her, hate her, and cast her from him, and go his way.

Yes, and then she would live in some other corner of the château; in the out-of-the-way rooms above the chapel, looking northward to the beech woods, perhaps; and these hateful, splendid bridal rooms might be his to inhabit when and how he chose. And when they met by chance, they would be "madame" and "monsieur" for each other; there would be a bow from him, a courtesy from her, and that would be all.

And then she might think of her dear love, and sin no sin against God or Raymond.

"Do you wish to read it?" she cried.

"Nay," said he; "to do that I must first take

lessons in hieroglyphics. What a crabbed hand you English write, to be sure."

It was not like Monsieur Raymond's calligraphy, certainly. His was a fine, clear, wire-drawn hand, which all who ran might read. And he was well satisfied with it, as he was with most things belonging to himself.

"And besides," he continued, "I hardly think your fair correspondent wrote with a view to my perusing her letter. For, as I see, the address is to 'Miss Russell,' not Madame Raymond de Montaignu."

And with that he placed it on the table, where Estelle was forced to let it lie until she should be alone.

And there seemed but little chance of that. First, a message came that the new curé wished to pay his respects to Monsieur Raymond. And no sooner had Raymond seen her comfortably on the sofa with eau-de-cologne at hand, and left her with a promise of quick return, than another message came that Madame la Comtesse would like Madame Raymond to come down if she were well enough, just to be introduced to the curé, who was going immediately. And while she was, smoothing her hair, up came Lisette with a counter-message from her husband to beg her not to think of troubling herself, as the curé could come another day.

She did manage to burn Louis Vivian's letter, but as for being alone!—

Madame's arrival at the château was the signal for every body to call. Day after day the noise of carriage-wheels up and down the avenue was heard from morning till night. For besides callers, there were madame's dinner-guests; and madame, knowing that her fame rested on her dinners, had issued invitations for a whole series of them the day after her son's marriage. And then there were balls, and *al fresco* entertainments, and private theatricals; and Estelle, instead of sitting in her silken boudoir, moaning for her English love, had long comedy parts to get by heart, besides rehearsals and trying on costumes, and hearing Raymond his parts, from morning till night.

No, she would never be alone any more, till they laid her to sleep under the quiet, kindly earth. She got to understand that, little by little, as the days went on.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH MRS. RUSSELL FINDS OUT HER MISTAKE.

MRS. RUSSELL, having taken considerable pains to leave her Toulouse friends under the impression that her immediate presence was required in England on family business, travelled to Paris with all speed, and there took up her abode at Meurice's with Julia, Alfred, and that pearl of lady's-maids, Mathurine. Although Mrs. Russell assigned no reason for her delay, Mathurine, with the help of her Languedoc mother-wit, could have told her in two words. It was but natural that Julia should guess the reason of this halt. Mrs. Russell was no doubt determined to prevent all chance of her meeting Harry, and was waiting till his ship should have sailed. This was, in fact, precisely the plan which Mrs. Russell had fixed on

before leaving Toulouse. She would prevent Julia's seeing her son, or even communicating with him. She watched her all day, and would have watched her all night as well, had it been possible. But Julia managed to circumvent her chaperone's sagacity. She wrote to Harry, watching in her turn till the silence in the adjacent room assured her of Mrs. Russell being asleep. She rose long before that lady awoke, and had her letter safely posted by one of the hotel waiters. But, wily as she was, Mrs. Russell was a match for her. The day her letter went there was a certain tone of self-satisfaction about her which her chaperone thought suspicious, as till then she had been in a measure subdued, owing to the recollection of the ill-luck of her Toulouse escapade. "She has been writing to Harry," Mrs. Russell concluded, and calculating how long before an answer might be expected, gave orders to Mathurine and to the person who had charge of the letters addressed to Maurice's, to bring any to her which might be addressed to the young lady who was travelling under her protection. She gave it to be understood that the young lady was ill sometimes—too ill to look at her own letters. Excitable, it must be understood, she said, tapping her forehead with an air of commiseration, and actually trembling at her boldness in telling such an awful falsehood. She, however, felt glad when it was told. After all, it was for Harry's sake, and she did not doubt that the recording angel would write on the margin of the page, "necessary;" if, indeed, the thing were recorded at all.

So, the waiter's memory being refreshed with a napoleon, Mrs. Russell's letters were always brought to her directly the post came, instead of being left down stairs till sent for. In a few days, one appeared amongst them addressed to Miss Maurice, and bearing the Portsmouth postmark. Thankful, indeed, did Mrs. Russell feel that the post had come so early, for she herself was in bed, and there was as yet no stir in either Alfred's or Julia's room. Most thankful did she feel that she had had courage to say what she did about the letters and about Julia.

"Do you see this?" she asked, holding the letter between her finger and thumb as if it contained the plague. "Bring me a lighted candle." Mathurine looked on with a queer smile as Mrs. Russell held the letter to the flame. She thought she saw. Yes. That was a letter madame saw fit to burn. Madame, doubtless, had her reasons.

"That letter," said Mrs. Russell, as she watched it burn, "is from my son to Miss Maurice. She has been writing to him, Mathurine, else he could not know of our being here, nor even guess it, for I have always stopped at the Hôtel Bristol before. She has been writing to him, you see; and I treat the answer—thus."

"And madame is right, *pardie !*" said Mathurine, with a mixed feeling of disgust at Mam'selle Julie's depravity, and of admiration at the energetic measures taken by Mrs. Russell.

"If there is occasion, Mathurine, I shall do the same thing again," her mistress said. "That woman shall *not* be my son's wife!" As the woman in question was in the adjoining room, this conversation was carried on in sibilant whispers.

"Yes, Mathurine, I will do it again," she said, when the maid was bringing her her morning coffee. "And I don't care if she knows it!"

And again Mathurine declared that madame was right; adding, moreover, that she knew even better than madame what a dreadful young woman that was. She had held her tongue, not wishing to disturb madame; but now that Made-moiselle Estelle, dear young lady, was happily established, and madame relieved from her anxieties on that head, madame should know every thing. She might have added that she had no more money to expect for her silence, but did not.

So the whole story of the balcony scenes came out in vehement whispers and with much gesticulation, though the very cap she wore had been bought with the last napoleon Harry had given her as hush-money.

Mrs. Russell listened till she felt stiff with horror. This was a thousandfold worse than the elopement. This could never be explained away, but once known would blast her reputation of being a wise, prudent matron, for ever and ever. Even in England, what would be said of the mistress of a house where the son could venture on midnight assignments with a lady-guest? She longed to scold Mathurine for knowing of such things and not instantly acquainting her. But she stopped herself. She did not dare scold Mathurine. She would never dare scold her now for any thing. Mathurine had but to give warning in a huff at being found fault with, and back she would go to Toulouse with the horrible tale; and so prevent her, Mrs. Russell, proud, unimpeachably correct as she had been all her life, from ever showing her face there again. As she thought of all this, she positively loathed Julia Maurice.

Julia, on her side, returned the loathing with interest. Had she been in Paris with any one else she would have enjoyed herself; but she could never look at Mrs. Russell without being reminded of that humiliating cheekmate at Auch. Over and over did she chafe at Mrs. Russell's strict chaperonage, and declare to herself that life would be a burden till she had escaped from that horrible old woman's hands.

Her miseries were not lessened by the company of the spoilt child Alfred. Alfred knew she was in disgrace with his mother, and presumed upon his knowledge to torment her.

"I say," he began one day, when Mrs. Russell had left the room, "do you know mamma found it very fatiguing, running after you? I heard her tell Mathurine you weren't worth the trouble of bringing back when she had got you."

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed Julia, raising her hand to box Alfred's ears. Alfred ducked, and the young lady's hand descended with force on the table.

"I hope it stings!" said the young monkey, performing a sailor's hornpipe in front of her.

"You little wretch!" she cried, smarting with pain.

"It is you who are the wretch, miss, not I," said Alfred; "for I heard mamma tell Mathurine that you were an ill-conducted young woman, and you deserved to be whipped, and that—"

But before he could proceed farther, Julia had caught hold of him and given him a shake that sent all the breath out of his little body.

"I say!" gasped the young informant, "just let me go, will you?"

"Not yet!" and she held him tight with one

hand while she boxed his ears soundly with the other.

"There!" she said, throwing him off after a finishing shake; "you imp of mischief, say that again, and your ears shall have just such another boxing."

"I'll tell my mamma, just see if I don't," whimpered Alfred from the floor.

"If you do," said Julia, setting her teeth, "I'll throw you into the sea when we are going across in the steamer."

And she looked so thoroughly in earnest, that the boy stifled his crying, and did not tell his mother.

But the day of deliverance dawned at last. One morning at breakfast, Mrs. Russell, who made the *Times* her daily study, read that H. M. S. *Hero*, Captain R. Bolitho, had been spoken with off the Lizard, on her way to her destination; having been detained in the Channel for nearly three weeks by contrary winds.

And then she smiled curiously behind the newspaper, and told Alfred to ring the bell.

"I wish to have my bill brought," she said to the waiter who attended. "And be so good as to bring the time-table of the tidal trains."

She carried off the sheet which contained the naval and military intelligence to her own room. She did not choose "that young woman" to learn any thing of her son's movements, even from the columns of a newspaper, if she could help it.

But there was still another sheet, and that Julia took and pored over till her hostess came back.

"Horrid old thing!" she thought to herself; "I dare say there is something about Harry's ship in that piece she has taken away. I knew she wouldn't take me across till the coast was clear. Not that I care, not I; only that I'd give my ears to spite her." And to show that she did not care, she began to talk about the news. It was such a pleasure—was it not?—to get the *Times* when it was not twenty-four hours old instead of three days or more, as it was when they got it at Toulouse.

"There is a bit of news from Devonshire too," she said; "just from my own part of the country."

"And what is that?" asked Mrs. Russell, with perfect courtesy.

"By the lamented demise," Julia read, "of the high-sheriff for the county of Devon, Sir George Vivian, of Vivian Court, Bart., the title and estates fall to the inheritance of Louis Vivian, Esq., of the Inner Temple, son of the late Louis Harrington Vivian, Esq.; the late baronet's two sons having died previously to their father. The present baronet took high honors during his academical career at Oxford, and possesses a fast-rising reputation in literary circles."

Julia had spited Mrs. Russell to some purpose at last. She did not know it, but she had dealt a home-thrust, and Mrs. Russell bled inwardly; though she still preserved a calm exterior, and only said, "Dear me! So sorry to hear that. I knew poor dear Sir George so well. Vivian Court goes to the heir, of course. I wonder where dear Lady Caroline will live? I must try to go and see her when I have placed Alfred at school. And now, my dear, will you put on your bonnet? I am going to the Place Vendôme to get some gloves. Mathurine will do your pack-

ing for you." And they walked out, these two, and bought gloves, and ate ices; and Mrs. Russell gave the detested Julia a lovely parasol that cost thirty francs, and chatted gayly all the way there and back, with that horrid piece of news weighing down her heart.

Yes, it was property worth a clear thirty thousand a year, besides those mining places in Cornwall that brought in such profits every two or three years. And she had prevented her daughter from marrying all this!

Julia would have danced with joy had she guessed how completely Mrs. Russell had been, in her turn, checkmated.

It was very unfortunate. Just those numbers of the *Times*, a perusal of which might have completely altered her plans with regard to establishing her daughter, had contained leaders obnoxious to the French government, and had been, one and all, confiscated by an order from the Tuileries; the copies addressed to the Hôtel St. Jean sharing, of course, the fate of all the rest.

CHAPTER XXI.

ONLY AN OLD PORTFOLIO.

THIRTY thousand a year is a nice thing; so is a title. The two combined allow of a man's expressing his opinions pretty freely, besides imposing them, if he be tyrannically inclined, on such small people of his acquaintance as count their yearly income by hundreds instead of thousands, and contrive to eke out existence without the help of ice-houses, pine-pits, or a handle to their names.

But from him to whom much is given much is required. When a baronet is so obliging as to die in the prime of life, the very least his successor can do is to bury him decently. This Sir Louis did, and something more. He set Muroi to work at a design for a monument to stand beside Lady Caroline's; and he contemplated putting in a stained window to the united memory of the family so strangely swept off to make room for him. He thought of it all, and spoke of it to his mother, without any affectation of sorrow or regret more than he really felt. The only two he grieved at all for were those two pretty boys; it was for their sakes principally that he wished to put in the window. His mother assented to everything he said. Her son always acted rightly and feelingly, said she. That settled, and Muroi hard at work, Louis wanted to set off straight to Toulouse to plead his cause face to face with Estelle. He guessed truly that if he chose to write again it would not be Mrs. Russell's fault if he were refused. But he was proud, and did not choose that she should interfere any more, either for good or evil.

But now his own mother interfered, unknowingly, to keep him back from hearing his fate. She did not feel equal to being left alone yet, she said. Every thing was very new and unexpected, and Louis must stay and help her through. She wondered at this erratic propensity so suddenly developed, now when he was just come into the possession of a home worth staying at home for.

"You can not go abroad," she said, nervously; "you really can not, till you have taken your position in the county."

"Here I am," said Louis, rising and planting himself on the rug in front of the fire. "Now then!"

"Nonsense! You know what I mean," Mrs. Vivian insisted. "Every body will be calling, of course; nobodies and all"—Mrs. Vivian had gone through Lady Caroline's visiting-book, and had made shrewd guesses as to who were the nobodies, already—"and we shall have to call in return. And I really don't feel equal to the exertion alone, my dear boy; I don't indeed." Which was an unrighteous fib. For Mrs. Vivian the baronet's mother, in the mourning robes furnished by Madame Elise, was a very different woman, inside and out, to Mrs. Vivian the poor barrister's mother, in a feebly-rustling, scanty garment of three-and-twopenny silk, that Miss Pincot would have scorned for her own afternoon wear.

"And how long will that take?" asked Louis, after a pause. It was horribly vexatious to be kept dawdling at Vivian Court for such a miserable, futile business as making the acquaintance of a lot of county magnates, who cared as little for him as he did for them, and whose sole claim to his courtesy was the fact of their having ridden across country with his uncle, and accepted Lady Caroline's dinner invitations once or twice annually.

He knew that his mother was right in a feminine, conventional point of view, about his "taking his position." But he was exceedingly vexed. He ground his teeth as he thought of the possible consequences of delay. But he took up the tangled threads of patience again before he spoke. He was not going to vent his vexation on his kind, fond, fussy old mother. And his voice was just as quiet as usual when he asked her that question.

"How long? That was really impossible to tell," said the artful woman, determined not to be left in the lurch before every one of those precious "county" people had called. They might get it over in about a fortnight or three weeks, perhaps. Much depended on the state of the weather. But every body would be calling, now that they had appeared in church.

This little conversation took place on a Monday morning, in the pretty morning-room opening on the fernery. At the word "church" Sir Louis's mouth relaxed into a broad grin, and he held his book up to his face much closer than was either necessary or comfortable for reading purposes.

They had gone to St. Stephen's together the day before, and Mrs. Vivian's dissenting eyes had almost started from their sockets at the sight that met them, when, after performing her private devotions, she lifted her thick veil and looked round the church from the queer little gallery which had always been used as the Vivian Court pew. There was a large cross—a cut, carved, gilded abomination—on the top of the altar-screen. There was a red dossal. There was a pair of tall, handsome candlesticks, suspiciously like the Vivian Court candlesticks, on the altar; and up the middle aisle, preceded by a lad in a white vestment, bearing another cross on a black pole, cut, and gilt, and jewelled—and followed by more lads in white robes—came the Rev. Alban Gray, in Romish vestments, cope, and stole, and chasuble, all made at the same shop which supplied St. Elfrida's, where Lady Caroline had been wont to perform her devotions during the season! All this she

saw, and sat down with a gasp, when the congregation rose to receive their priest as he passed up to the chancel.

If Sir Louis had not been there, Mrs. Vivian would have descended from the strange perch in which she found herself, and walked out of church in face of all the congregation. But with him sitting by to remind her that she was a baronet's mother, her powers of endurance rose, and she staid through the service as pluckily as if she had been a martyr tied to a stake, although the Misses Maurice in the pew below kept bowing at intervals all prayer-time, in a most aggravating manner, and Mr. Gray preached in his surplice on baptismal regeneration.

But as soon as the dismissal had been pronounced, she rose, hastily descended the stairs, and was out in the church-yard and in the carriage before the astonished Louis could offer his arm. "Rotten! rotten to the core!" she ejaculated, as they drove home.

She electrified the evangelical butler at dinner by declaring that no earthly power should induce her to enter such a blasphemous place again. No; give her a barn—an outhouse—so as she might hear sound doctrine preached in it. It was the first time that such "low" sentiments had found an utterance at the Vivian Court dinner-table, and the butler might well be electrified.

"Well, you know, mother," Sir Louis said, "one must go to the parish church when one is in the country. When we are in town, we can wander about till we find a preacher to our tastes. Here we have no choice. If we go to the next parish, we naturally are supposed to be at loggerheads with the clergyman of our own. And I, mother, would be the last man to degrade a parish priest in the estimation of his own poor flock, as he would be degraded if the first man in his parish chose to go to church in the next. And I declare, as long as a fellow preaches a good sermon, I don't care a straw whether he preaches it in a white gown or a yellow one."

"Better give the parish the example of staying away from a place where such sermons are preached as that we heard to-day. To think," Mrs. Vivian continued, warming with her theme, "that so near the scene of the blest labors of Whitefield and Wesley we should still have men who can dare to preach of baptismal regeneration!"

"Good gracious!" said Sir Louis, with ever so slight a tinge of impatience in his voice, "if there are still men who believe it, why on earth shouldn't they preach it?"

"I don't believe that they do believe it. They only say it in order to keep the poor people in more subjection to the yoke. I couldn't have credited what I heard from the pulpit this morning if any body had told me at second-hand. It was awful."

"What could the fellow have been saying?" Sir Louis wondered.

"Not one word about 'conviction' or 'saving grace' from beginning to end."

"Well, I suppose a fellow can't be always dragging in 'conviction,' can he? Perhaps he'll preach about conviction this evening." He wanted his mother to stop. But when once she was mounted on her hobby that was hard to accomplish. On she went, full tilt. Lady Caroline herself would not have stopped her now.

"You don't mean to tell me as a candid person—I don't mean to say as a converted person, for that you are not—but candidly, did you approve of that sermon? Was there one jot of edification all through it?"

"I really am not qualified to sit in judgment over it," said Sir Louis; "for, to tell the truth, I was thinking of something else all the time. There are very few sermons a man cares to listen to nowadays."

This gave Mrs. Vivian something else to think about, and put an end to the conversation. Of course there were no sermons fit to be listened to in the Establishment. But if her Louis could be brought to sit under a minister of the "connection!" And straightway the widow fell to praying that her son might be freed from Church trammels and get "convinced" of sin.

That afternoon she set out through the muddy lanes to find out whether there were any meeting held in the adjoining village. She entered one little dwelling on her way, seeing the door stand open and chairs placed round the stone-flagged kitchen, as if in expectation of a gathering. But, on inquiry, she found the people were Bryanites, mostly from the next village; and as her *esprit de corps* would not allow her to fraternize with a body entirely unrecognized by the "connection," she turned her back on the cottage, and consoled herself by reading some of Wesley's sermons to unbelievers convinced of sin, in the solitude of her own room for the rest of the afternoon.

Owing partly to the beauty of the weather, and partly to the curiosity of the country neighbors as to what manner of people the Vivian Court people were, Mrs. Vivian's visiting-book—a bran new red morocco affair, exactly like Lady Caroline's—was filled with the desired names in a comparatively short space of time; and Mrs. Vivian was thinking it would be proper to fill her card-case and return calls; a much more formidable matter, she averred, than receiving them.

"Why should you bore yourself on my account?" said her son. "I'd much rather you did not. Give one of the servants a list of names, and send him round with the carriage. That's what people do; so why not take advantage of the custom, instead of worrying yourself about a lot of people for whom you don't care a twopence?"

"Send cards round! Oh, dear, no!" Mrs. Vivian said. She was not going to shirk her duty. So she ordered the carriage, and filled her card-case, and drove solemnly round and round the neighborhood, with Louis at her side. After the first day or so, I am bound to acknowledge that she liked her duty very much, and felt uncommonly disappointed when people happened to be out, and the card-case was called into requisition. Every body was very civil and kind—quite friendly, she declared to her son over and over again, as they drove through the lovely Devonshire lanes to and from the various country-seats on her list.

"But then, you know, my dear," she added, with an afterthought of motherly shrewdness, "they would be civil naturally, when one comes to think of it, merely on account of your being an unmarried man."

"Oh, indeed!" said Sir Louis, laughing.

"Yes, my dear; and you will have to be very careful. Nothing can exceed the artfulness of girls nowadays, I'm told."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Sir Louis, briefly. And then he went up again into the clouds, whence he had descended to hear the reason of people's civility to Mrs. Vivian.

Although Wembury Hall was near Vivian Court, it came quite at the bottom of Mrs. Vivian's list. This was partly because the Maurices were among the "nobodies," and partly because they—that is, the admiral—had not chosen to hurry that matter of calling, so anxiously expected and commented on by one, at least, of the new-comers.

"Do you suppose the new baronet will miss us if we don't call at all?" he had said surlily, when Lizzie eagerly referred to Sir Louis and Mrs. Vivian's appearance in church, and asked when they might have the pony-carriage, which nobody except Julia ever ventured to order without the admiral's express permission.

"We shall be expected to call, of course," said the confident Lizzie, "and every body will think it very odd if we don't do it soon, being such near neighbors."

"And do you suppose I care for what every body says or thinks?" the Admiral had retorted crustily. "I'll be shot if I go near the place this week, or you either."

And the three young ones opined from this conversation—which took place on Sunday, at dessert, else they had not heard it—the three young ones opined, as soon as they were alone in their school-room, that Lizzie was always putting her foot in it, and that she never would come round papa like Ju, not if she tried till she was a hundred.

It was a great relief to Lizzie, feeling powerless as she did against the admiral's crustiness, when Julia returned and gathered up the reins of authority at Wembury Hall.

"We ought to call on those people," she said, when they were alone in Julia's room the night of her arrival, after the younger sisters had been dismissed by a broad hint of the lateness of the hour.

Julia sat lazily in her dressing-gown, watching her sister as she brushed her long curly mane, and told the news. "The girl is handsomer than ever," she thought, drawing her hair absently round and round her finger. "It's very lucky I didn't dismiss Master Herbert as I intended. I think I'll write to him to-morrow. I must make him do, if nothing better offers."

"And what sort of people are they?" she said, turning to the glass to see how her own face looked compared to Lizzie's. She averted her face hurriedly. The comparison was unfavorable. Bah! she had been journeying all day, and, of course, she was tired to death. She would look to-morrow.

"I can't tell what sort of people they are. That's what is so provoking," said Lizzie. "If I only saw them in a room once I could tell. That is just it. Papa won't call yet; only because I was unlucky enough to say we ought to call sooner than people who lived farther off; which was perfectly true. And positively we've met them three times when we were out walking; and they have whirled by and cut us dead, although we know who they are, and they know

who we are, as well as possible. And all because papa chooses to be pig-headed. I declare it's too bad!" And Lizzie brushed her hair violently.

"Is it worse than it was when I went away?" asked Julia, after a reflective pause, alluding to the pig-headedness.

"Worse! I should think so. It's something awful!" cried Lizzie, seizing her sister's brush as well as her own. "It's well you are come home to keep him in order, Ju: for I don't know what would have become of us else. The last thing he made a row about was the butcher's bills and the groceries. There was such a shindy! He had cook up, and lectured her; and, of course, cook gave warning that instant. Then he rowed Hen about the quantity of tea and orange marmalade. Hen had such an awful cry; thought, like a goose, that he must be in difficulties, and offered to give up part of her quarter's allowance. Difficulties, indeed! If we can't have as much marmalade for breakfast as we like, I'd like to know what business he had to buy that terrier Alerte, and give ten guineas for her, only the other day?"

"Ten guineas for that beast that he lets into the dining-room! She's pure-bred, to be sure, and a splendid dog, but it was a shame to pay that money for her. If I'd been home— How do you know he gave ten guineas for her?" asked Julia.

"I do know," was all Lizzie said, brushing away at her curly locks.

"You shouldn't brush your hair so much at night. It's bad for the hair," observed Julia.

The young lady desisted immediately. "I didn't know that," she said, laying down the brushes; "but somehow, brushing away at my hair is the only way I've got for expressing my feelings about papa. It would be awfully jolly if ladies could swear, I often think. Shouldn't you like it, Ju? Oh, I say, Ju, he's been and sold White-stocking, because he said he was eating his head off. I didn't tell you when I wrote last, because I thought you'd be in such a towering rage. Why, Ju!"

For Julia's face had turned white, and then red, and she had seized her brush, and thrown it to the farther end of the room. Her lips moved, but no sound came, and her eyes had quite a murderous look in them for one moment. That passed, and then she rose and began pacing the room.

"Oh, Ju, I'm sorry I told you," said the half-frightened Lizzie.

"Never mind," said her sister, "I should have found it out by to-morrow morning. Con-found him!" she said, between her teeth, stopping short and stamping her foot. "What am I to do for my ride now, I should like to know?"

"Oh, Ju, take care; he'll hear. His dressing-room is just below."

"What do I care?" exclaimed her sister violently. "I wish he may hear. The only thing I care for in this wretched, dull place is my ride, and it's nothing but his horrid, mean selfishness that would have made him part with my horse."

"Oh, Ju, why haven't you got married all these years that you've been out?" said Lizzie, with tears in her eyes. "You have had chances. I should think it was better to put up with any body almost than to go on like this."

"I shall do something. I won't put up with it much longer," was Julia's reply.

"And you'll have the pony-carriage out to-morrow, eh?" was Lizzie's parting word.

And they did have the pony-carriage out on the morrow, and aired their best bonnets by a drive to Vivian Court and back again, for the Vivians were not at home. But, as Lizzie remarked, they could not cut them dead again if they met in the road, and that was a mercy.

"I am going up to town to-morrow," Louis said, when he met his mother at luncheon, after a long morning spent with the steward in the library.

"Oh," was all Mrs. Vivian said.

"I shall be away a week or ten days. I am going abroad. Here's a check that will enable you to carry on till I come back."

"My goodness! Louis, you have made a mistake. It's for two hundred pounds. My dear, it is too much. What are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking that very likely you had a dreadful milliner's bill to pay. You are so remarkably well dressed, do you know, mamma."

"I wish to dress according to the station in which Providence has pleased to place me. We are but worms, worms," said Mrs. Vivian, shaking her head mournfully.

"You don't look much like one yet," said her son with wonderful gravity; "and I wish you would not make vermicious allusions at luncheon-time, mamma, for it spoils my appetite."

Thus admonished, Mrs. Vivian finished her luncheon without further attempts at improving the occasion, and merely asked if he would come with her, as she had a call to make that afternoon.

"Another!" said Sir Louis. "How many more, in the name of wonder? Are we to spend our lives in the vocative case?"

"I've only this one, now," said his mother. By way of expressing her sense of their tardiness in making her acquaintance, the Maurices' name had been put at the very bottom of her list. Poor Lizzie had been in an agony of apprehension lest they should not call at all.

As the carriage turned into the small inclosure dignified by the name of shrubbery, which hid Wembury Hall from the vulgar gaze of the day-laborers and market-folk, the only wayfarers, almost, that ever trod that road, Mrs. Vivian said to Sir Louis:

"Now, my dear, be careful. Nothing can exceed the artfulness of girls, and I understand there is a large family of them here."

"They can't all marry me, if that's what you mean," said Sir Louis. He was thinking which route he would take; Folkestone and Boulogne, or Dover and Calais. He was not quite sure which would take him to Paris quickest. And then the carriage stopped, and Clara, Emily, and Lucy, who had all three sprung to the school-room window at the sound of carriage-wheels, rushed up stairs, in defiance of Miss Brydges, to notify the visit to Lizzie and Julia, who were closeted in the bedroom of the last-named sister.

"They're come!" cried the girls, out of breath with their race.

"I wish you would not burst into my room in that rude way," said Julia crossly.

"Who is come? Not the Court people?" asked Lizzie, looking up from a box of millinery of Julia's which she was turning out.

"Yes, Sir Louis and Mrs. Vivian!" shouted Clara. And then they all ran away again.

"Really," said Julia, as she put away her blotting-book with a letter in it, half-finished, to Herbert Waldron, "that child Clara gets so hoydenish that it is quite unbearable."

"You'll have to take her in hand," said Lizzie, taking up a small mirror to look at her back hair.

"Shall I do?" said Julia.

"Yes, you'll do," said Lizzie. And then they went down into the drawing-room, and found Mrs. Vivian talking to their mother quite pleasantly about Mdlle. Riego's new antimacassar patterns, and Sir Louis laughing at something that Clara was saying.

For those three school-room misses, Emily, Lucy, and Clara, instead of returning to Miss Brydges and their German lesson, had boldly invaded the drawing-room, contrary to all rule and precedent, in their anxiety to have a good look at their new neighbor. Julia put a good face on the matter, but promised herself the satisfaction of giving them a good scolding by-and-by—the impertinent monkeys!

"Don't run away," said Mrs. Maurice, when Mrs. Vivian rose at the end of the conventional ten minutes. "We always have tea about this time; do stay and have a cup. Julia or Clara, will you touch the bell? I think it is just five, is it not?" said the poor lady, appealingly; as though she feared the admiral might hear and contradict her.

So they had tea, young ones and all, in a friendly family way, and grew very chatty and communicative over their cups, as people do in the country.

Presently Julia said: "Dear me, how could I be so thoughtless! Clara, will you take Miss Brydges a cup? And ask her whether I have made it sweet enough. Take down the sugar-basket with you, dear."

Miss Clara was engrossing far too much of the baronet's attention, Julia thought, and this was a feat to get rid of her.

"Lucy, you had better go to open the school-room door," she added, as Clara rose to take the cup.

"Miss Brydges is our governess. She generally takes her cup of tea with us of an afternoon. But she does not care about coming into the drawing-room when there are strangers. I hope she won't think me neglectful. The fact is, I've been from home so long that I've forgotten some of our home ways," said the young lady to Mrs. Vivian, who thought, "How very considerate! Such a beautiful young woman, too!"

"My daughter Julia is just come back from the south of France, where she has been for her health," said Mrs. Maurice.

"Indeed! Miss Maurice looks the picture of health," said Mrs. Vivian.

"She is quite restored, I am thankful to say," replied the mother. "She has brought us home such a quantity of photographic views; and a most interesting collection of water-color drawings of Pyrenean costumes. My dear, where did you put them?"

"Sir Louis won't care to look at them, mamma. No doubt he has thousands of drawings and photographs a great deal finer than what I have brought home."

"Indeed," said Sir Louis politely, "I shall like to see them very much, for they will remind me of a tour I made some two years since. And I am not aware of possessing any collection of southern views. Of Pyrenean costumes I am sure I have not one."

"Oh, but I know there is such a collection," said Lizzie; "for the last time we were there, Lady—" And she stopped, for Julia trod on her foot under the table.

"You must come up one day soon, and show me my riches," said Sir Louis, kindly. "I am very fond of pictures of all sorts. I have got a sculptor at work at my aunt's—at Lady Caroline's monument, which will be, I think and hope, a *chef-d'œuvre*. He is a genuine Italian, and such an odd, simple fellow. I dare say it would amuse you to see him at work." He said this merely because he was sorry to see Lizzie's sudden look of confusion.

"Oh, thank you; it would be so nice," she replied, relieved at hearing him speak so calmly of Lady Caroline.

Mrs. Vivian was not near enough to give him a warning nudge. But all this was trying, after her begging him so earnestly just before they entered the house to be careful, because of the artfulness of girls.

"I am afraid Sir Louis is promising more than he knows how to perform," she said, pointedly. "Signor Muroli likes to work alone. He told me only yesterday he could not bear interruption."

"I have placed the photographs on the stand by the window, if you would like to look," said Julia.

"Thank you," said the baronet. And then he began turning them over, and she had him *tête-à-tête*, which was what she wanted.

"And now I must show you my water-colors; they are in another portfolio," she said, when the last photograph had been admired.

"We are making quite a visitation," said Mrs. Vivian ceremoniously.

"Oh, but I must show you these," cried Julia, "for I consider them quite valuable. There are lithographic prints to be got of these costumes, certainly; but they are horrors compared to water-color drawings really well done, as these are. They were a parting gift from a very, very dear friend of mine," said the young lady with a passing sigh. "These are all of the Hautes Pyrénées. Do you recognize any of them?"

"I do; this one, for example, seems quite an old friend," said Louis, taking up a drawing of a peasant of the Gorge of Luz. "I could almost think I had seen this very peasant-woman sitting by the stream, lading her pig, and scratching his back. There is a great deal of spirit in this drawing, as far as I am a judge. I should say the artist might do great things some day."

"So I think. My friend will never do any more though, so I may consider myself lucky to have got these. Women always give up their accomplishments when they marry."

"What's that about marrying?" said Mrs. Maurice, approaching the window.

"Miss Maurice was observing that women always gave up their accomplishments when they married," said Sir Louis.

"Well, they do generally, somehow. I can't say I did; but then I never had any to speak of.

I married too early; quite a girl, you know; and I didn't know how to order dinner in the least; and I was afraid of my cook. I don't approve of early marriages; do you? Girls ought to enjoy themselves while they can, ought they not?"

Mrs. Vivian agreed entirely with Mrs. Maurice.

"Ah," said Julia, "you would say so if you had been in the South, where I was all last winter; where every girl is expected to marry before she is eighteen, and where she is an old maid at one-and-twenty! The young lady who gave me these drawings was married on her eighteenth birthday, and would have been married before if she had not resisted her mother's wishes. As it was, if ever there was a forced marriage, that was one."

"My dear, you should not say that," said Mrs. Maurice, timidly. "You don't know—"

"Truth is truth, mamma. And I ought to know, as I watched the thing from beginning to end," said Julia, with decision.

"The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty," observed Mrs. Vivian. "After all, what natural affection can we expect among those wretched Papists?"

"They weren't Papists, Mrs. Vivian—"

"Good gracious! What's the matter?"

The exclamation came from Mrs. Maurice.

"I beg your pardon," stammered Sir Louis; "I slanted the portfolio too much, and it made the stand top-heavy. They are very interesting drawings—as you say; but I fear we must defer seeing the remainder to some future time."

"Oh," said Julia, with her most fascinating smile, "if you really like them, pray take them home, and look them over at your leisure."

And, much to Mrs. Vivian's wonder and vexation, the baronet actually seized upon the offer, and, what was worse, carried the portfolio down stairs and put it into the carriage himself, although the servant was in attendance. In consequence of this, she made her adieux to the Maurices much colder than she had at first intended them to be. She felt that she must take care of Louis, if he was really so stupid and absent as to commit himself in this way. So she made not the slightest allusion to the fact of their being near neighbors, nor hoped that they should see much of each other.

She took her son to task as soon as they were fairly on the road again.

"What on earth did you want of that lot of drawings, when you know the house is positively littered already with photographs and things? I declare, Louis, one would think you wished to have an excuse for becoming intimate. I shall send that old portfolio back to-morrow."

"Don't talk such nonsense!" exclaimed her son, in a tone that signified what his displeasure would be at such a piece of interference.

Mrs. Vivian got frightened at his unusual bluntness, and held her tongue, but eyed him inquisitively from behind her crape veil. "Good gracious!" she thought, "how dreadfully pale he is! Is it possible that he has gone and fallen in love with one of those girls at first sight?" And then she wandered off into speculations as to her future daughter-in-law. There was one very consolatory feature in the Maurice family. They did not appear to be at all clever. There were

nothing but silly novels and volumes of poetry on their drawing-room table; and yet, with such pairs of fascinating eyes round him, a man might forget that there were such things as learned books till it was too late. Thus balanced between hope and fear, Mrs. Vivian reached home and dressed for dinner, a laborious daily ceremony which her soul abhorred, but which she never flinched from, believing that her position required it.

"Well, Jn," said Lizzie, when the carriage had driven off, "what do you think of him? I think he's rather slow, myself."

"Horrid, shaggy, unkempt brute," said Julia, who was never at a loss for adjectives; "he looks for all the world like the Wandering Jew, and he can't talk one bit. That's what I think of him. And the old mother is a muff!"

"I shouldn't mind being mistress at the Court, though; should you?" suggested Lizzie.

"Oh, that's quite another thing, you know," said Julia.

"Thank goodness," Mrs. Vivian thought, as she bade her son good-night, "he is going away to-morrow. I wish I hadn't asked him to go with me to call on those Maurices. He ought to marry higher than that, most certainly."

All night long did Sir Louis struggle against the uncontrollable longing to see Estelle once more; to hear her lips say what those sweet gray eyes had said already, "I will love you all my life," and then bear her away like a knight of old from the man who had dared usurp his place. For was not he her true husband? his hungry heart asked again and again. Had not their two souls been united in holy wedlock, in the sight of God, with the Pyrenees in their white and purple vesture standing as witnesses? Who was this interloper, that dared drive them asunder?

When the early sun shone into his room, it lit up the table still scattered with her drawings, and his weary head pillowed at last on the old portfolio that bore her maiden name. One ray, warmer than the rest, touched his face and woke him.

The night had brought counsel. A still small voice had spoken, silencing his heart, accusing him of the selfish cowardice that hid behind his better love; telling him, that as things had fallen out, so they must remain, even for her good, in the midst of all possible misery. For a nature so pure and loyal as Estelle's, the bare fact of a man's being her husband would invest him with a sanctity that could belong to no other.

He rose, and gathered up the drawings reverently, as men handle what has belonged to the dead.

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. VIVIAN FINDS SOMETHING TO DO.

MRS. VIVIAN kept on repeating to herself that girls were very artful, and that she was glad Louis was out of the way; but he had not been gone a week before she began to feel very desolate in the great, silent house, and to want him back again as heartily as she had wished him gone. As an antidote against vain wishes, one fine morning after luncheon she put on her bonnet, and set out with her feet encased in a good uncompromising pair of thick boots—for there had been rain over-

night—and a roll of tracts covered with brown paper in her hand, on an amateur district-visiting tour among the neighboring cottages.

The sun was hot and a steaming mist rose from the land and lay like a white belt round the horizon. Mrs. Vivian went on bravely at first, picking handfuls of the red cuckoo-pint and silver-lady which spread in broad streaks up and down the high hedges; but the hedges came to an end, and she had before her a long, stony, shadeless piece of road, which seemed to lengthen at every step. She went on till she had got about half-way, and then was so dead-beat that she had to sit down on a great stone by a furze-bush, and rest, with her back to the hill and her face seaward. She sat there so long, that two rabbits which were passing stopped to look at her, and a big green and yellow caterpillar began to crawl up her back, thinking it the shortest cut to the furze-bush. The rabbits, feeling they could make nothing of it, had hopped away home, and the green and yellow caterpillar had just got one front leg on to the furze-twigg, when Mrs. Vivian, who had only kept so still hitherto because she was dozing, gave a great start, and the caterpillar fell down on the thymy slope, rolled like a ball a matter of four feet downward till he was stopped by a pebble, and then had to begin again.

The reason of Mrs. Vivian's start was, that she had been roused by the sound of footsteps on a country road where you might walk for miles and not meet any one. She turned round in a fright, and grasped her umbrella, expecting to see a beggar, but was surprised to find it was only a young lady.

The young lady was surprised too. She had evidently imagined that her walk down that road was to be quite private and lonely, for she had taken off her hat and unpinned her shawl, and held a villainous old parasol over her head. She stopped for a second and looked, and Mrs. Vivian, returning the look by one of half-recognition, jumped up from the big stone with a feeling of annoyance at being found in such an undignified position. Here was somebody she had met before, and ought to speak to; and she had been caught with her back in the furze-bush, her crape skirts drawn up, showing thick, unmistakably muddy country boots, and her bonnet-strings all awry. She felt somehow as though she had been disgracing the baronet whose mother she had the honor to be, and jumped up quite flustered.

"One of the Miss Maurices—I think," she said, holding out her hand doubtfully. She had a beautiful French glove on, and the sight of it restored her self-possession.

(N.B.—Now it was the caterpillar's turn to get flustered. He had unrolled himself cautiously, had crawled within a foot of the desired furze-bush, and was preparing to mount a pebble of some magnitude, when Mrs. Vivian put her foot on it, and thereby all but squashed his head off. He ducked in the very nick of time, and did not regain nerve enough for the ascent till nearly sunset. Mrs. Vivian was unconscious of the small tragedy so nearly enacted through her instrumentality; therefore, instead of improving the occasion, she shook hands with the unknown, who was no other than Henrietta Maurice.)

"I am Miss Maurice," said she, giving a hand by no means white, and a gloveless one; for she

never put on gloves except to go into town or to church. Her hands were a disgrace, to be sure, but then, as she said to herself, when they got more scratched or tanned than usual, who cared? And she had a few more half-crowns for the poor thereby.

"I think I must be speaking to Mrs. Vivian," she added, and even as she spoke the flush on her cheeks that had arisen from walking down hill against the breeze died away, and Mrs. Vivian felt sure that she and this Miss Maurice had not met before.

"I was not at home when you and Sir Louis called on mamma the other day," she said; "it was one of my busy days, and I was on my visiting rounds among the poor people. There is so much sickness about now that I am obliged to make quite a day of it when I go."

"Oh, so you visit in the parish," said the widow, aware now that she had been very near poaching on somebody's grounds.

"Yes." And then they walked homeward, and after a remark or two about the beauty of the weather, Henrietta, seeing that Mrs. Vivian appeared a kindly, unsophisticated sort of body, plunged into the grievance nearest her heart, viz., the disgraceful state of the parish in general. She enlarged on this theme so that it lasted till they got within sight of the Vivian Court woods. The salient points of her discourse were: pigsties commanding a front view of the dwellings to which they belonged (she laid great stress on this, having been frightened out of her wits that afternoon by two big grunTERS that had barred her passage on the high road for full ten minutes); public-houses, of which the proportion was one to every three cottages; and bedroom windows that wouldn't open.

"And the poverty is something indescribable," she said; "as it is generally in the agricultural parishes down here. I know many families who live on barley bread and treacle and weak tea nearly all the year round. One can't scold them, you know, for being dirty and ragged, when one knows that they have no money to buy either soap or needles and thread."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Vivian, "the poor must be worse off down here than they are about Dorking—that's where I used to live before I came here."

"I am just come from a cottage where there are eleven children, half of them babies, and the father only gets twelve shillings a week," said Henrietta.

"Dear, dear! I declare it is quite tempting Providence," Mrs. Vivian exclaimed, agast.

Then Henrietta descanted upon the low fever which was then prevalent. This topic brought them to a gate, where they stopped to take breath, and where a dip in the ground showed them the sea with the sun on it.

"I am glad to have met you, Mrs. Vivian," Henrietta said presently, "for I intended calling on you, on purpose to try to interest you in the poor belonging to the parish. I do what I can, but I want help sadly. I am almost alone, for the clergyman's wife, poor thing, is a sad invalid, quite unequal to the exertion of walking. The parish is a very scattered one; it consists of three straggling, wretched villages—"

And Henrietta suddenly turned ashy pale, and collapsed quietly into a furze-bush.

Mrs. Vivian was too surprised to scream. She picked her out of the furze-bush, laid her on the grass with her head raised, and waited, supposing the young lady would "come to" presently. But Henrietta was a long while "coming to;" so long that Mrs. Vivian had time to observe her features attentively; and the sum of her observations was, that Miss Maurice was a plain, a very plain, likeness of her two sisters, Lizzie and Julia; that she had a singularly old expression, and that her hair was turning gray.

By-and-by Henrietta opened her eyes, and said, with some alarm:

"How shall I get home?"

Mrs. Vivian had thought of that already; the easiest way would be for her to walk on and send the carriage from Vivian Court, but she did not exactly like to leave the invalid alone.

"Oh, you needn't mind that," said Henrietta, feebly; "it is the most unlikely thing that any one should pass at this time of day, and if they did they would not hurt me. All the cottagers round here know me well."

"But the beggars, my dear! Round Dorking there used to be such numbers of them in spring."

"I don't think there are any here," said Henrietta; "only a few poachers, and I am not a bit afraid of them."

Reassured by Henrietta's confidence, Mrs. Vivian set off homeward, and returned in less than an hour with the carriage, both the tall footmen, and Miss Pincot, carrying eau-de-cologne and brandy. A young lady fainting by the roadside was such a novel occurrence, and Mrs. Vivian's having somebody to take care of so novel too, that she enjoyed herself very much, in spite of her feeling, very properly, sorry.

Henrietta, after being lifted into the carriage by the two tall footmen, fainted away again quite comfortably, with her head on Mrs. Vivian's lap, so alarming Miss Pincot that a recourse to stimulants by that young woman became a *sine qua non*. When Miss Maurice, on being lifted out of the carriage, and laid on a sofa in the blue drawing-room, relapsed into a third fainting-fit, Mrs. Vivian's sense of enjoyment changed into very genuine alarm, and a groom was ordered to ride hard for a doctor. The housekeeper, a pink lady in moire antique, weighing some twenty-four stone—the lady, not the moire antique—opined that Miss Maurice had better be undressed and put to bed. As the suggestion appeared a very sensible one, Mrs. Vivian resolved to act upon it; but movement of any kind had such a bad effect on the patient, that they were forced to leave her alone until the doctor came, which he did about dinner-time.

He was a jolly little man, very nearly as fat as the housekeeper; and he came into the blue drawing-room with such an all-pervading air of nothing-at-all-the-matter-my-dear-madam, that Mrs. Vivian felt sure it must be all right, and that she would get laughed at and pooh-poohed for her pains.

The jolly little man bobbed in acknowledgment of the lady of the house, and said: "A case of syncope, nothing more is it, ma'am?" and looked as if syncope was rather pleasant than otherwise, and he defied you to prove it was not.

"That is all," said Mrs. Vivian: "only it is so lasting that I became quite alarmed. The

young lady is here, on the sofa by the window, Dr. —"

"Jenkins." And he walked quickly to the space between the sofa and the window, so as to have a front view of the patient.

"Bless my soul!" he cried, "why, it's Miss Maurice."

"Is that you, Dr. Jenkins? Oh, I am so glad!" said Henrietta. "I don't know what's come to me. I have been giving Mrs. Vivian such trouble."

"No trouble at all, my dear," said Mrs. Vivian, kindly, as Dr. Jenkins stretched out his hand to feel the patient's pulse.

"You have been overwalking, Miss Maurice, as usual," said he, "and now you've knocked yourself up altogether. I told you last year that would be the consequence, but you would not attend to me. Now you must, whether you like it or not. You've strained your back, and you're down for a fortnight."

Henrietta could not defend herself. She felt too ill.

"This is an old patient, Mrs. Vivian," said the doctor, turning to her, "and a very obstinate one. I ought to know, for I've attended her family ever since she was a mite."

Mrs. Vivian took him into the next room, and asked him whether there was any thing serious the matter.

"Oh dear no, not in the least, not in the least," said Dr. Jenkins. "I know her constitution, my dear madam. Weak back, that's all. Perfect repose for a certain length of time is all that is required. I should not advise her being moved for a day or two, if you can keep her here conveniently."

"Of course," Mrs. Vivian said. She should not think of allowing her removal till she was perfectly recovered. And then, just as the doctor was going away, she bethought herself of the desolate great dining-room with its expanse of table-cloth, and begged him to stay and dine with her. Thinking it would not be a bad thing, he looked at his watch and said he would stay, if Mrs. Vivian would engage to let him off immediately after.

Mrs. Vivian, who had the habit of passing each day's occurrences in review before she sought her pillow, and strictly scrutinizing her own part in them, was shocked to find how pleasantly and how fast the hours had slipped by since the afternoon. She confessed humbly that she was not half sorry enough for Henrietta, whom she had by her own hands undressed and laid in the best bed-chamber, with infinite difficulty, owing to the oft-recurring fainting-fits, which awed Miss Pincot into helplessness, and made the pink housekeeper turn pale and quiver like a blanc-mange that had not enough isinglass in it.

I leave you to imagine Wallis's feelings when the hall-clock struck six that evening, and no Miss Maurice appeared. He declared himself, before the whole array of decanters and tumblers on the pantry shelves, to be fit to go wild. He knew his young mistress was gone on one of her charitable expeditions, for he had himself poured the wine for her sick people into a medicine-bottle, corked and wrapped it up, and lain in wait at the pantry door, ready to give it to her as she passed dressed for her walk that morning. He had asked if she would be home to luncheon, and

on being told "No," had urged respectfully that long walks without food were hurtful. "When the admiral goes out shooting, miss, he has his luncheon took to him reg'lar, if you will excuse my saying so, miss."

"I shall get some luncheon at the vicarage, Wallis," Henrietta had said, with a shadow of a smile for the old servant who took an interest in her. And Wallis had opened the door for her with a weight off his mind. Now six was striking, and she ought to have been back nearly two hours ago.

"Darn that rampaging old clock!" he muttered, standing in front of it. "I wish I could just get to the inside of un for one half-minute. But if wishes was horses, beggars would ride. So here goes. And the gong went like mad—"like the day of judgment," Wallis said. You see, Henrietta's non-appearance was so certain to affect the admiral's temper, that it affected his servants by anticipation.

There was the usual sharp look round, the inquiry for Henrietta, and the grunt of disapproval on being informed she was not yet come in. The admiral spoke no more till he had finished his soup. Then he said sharply: "Take away. If Miss Maurice comes in, she can dine in the school-room, or in her own room. I won't have dinner kept here all night. This is always happening now." Mrs. Maurice coughed meekly, but did not speak, and Julia said to Lizzie, in French, that no doubt Hen would rather have her dinner in peace, and had very likely staid out on purpose; and she thought they had all better patronize the school-room tea in future.

The admiral ate his dinner in very tolerable silence, and Wallis hoped for the best. But when dessert was put on the table, and no Henrietta appeared, her father became furious, and used a great deal of quarter-deck language, which caused his wife and daughters to beat a retreat to the drawing-room.

"I declare it's too bad," said Lizzie to her sister. "I can't help laughing, Ju, but it is a shame for papa to get into such bad tempers. It's a bad example to Wallis; and, if I were you, I should tell him so."

"Tell him yourself!" retorted Julia, who was not in the best of temper that evening. "I know the length of my tether."

"My dears," said Mrs. Maurice, with the air of a woman who has made an important discovery, "your papa is rather irritable, you know. It's his constitution. He requires a great deal of soothing, my dears. All the Maurices are so: it runs in the family; and it was very wrong of Henrietta not to be in. I must beg her not to let it happen again. Your papa will be all the better after a little change of air. He always requires it, you know. I think it's the weather myself. We had rain last night, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if we had a thunderstorm to-night."

Lizzie threw herself into an arm-chair and screamed with laughter.

"Oh, that's too good!" she cried. "Mamma putting papa's temper down to the weather! I dare say Hen staid away to have a little peace at dinner when she came home. For my part, I think we had better all of us dine in our rooms, and let papa fume alone in his glory."

"Hen is a great fool!" said Julia, from the ottoman. "Note for me, Wallis?" she asked, stretching out her hand as the servant entered with a salver.

"Not for you, miss," he replied, approaching her mother. "The groom said there was an answer, ma'am."

"Who from, mamma?" Julia asked, before her mother had time to read the note.

Mrs. Maurice ran through it hastily, and then burst into a violent fit of weeping, and exclaimed that she had always said so.

"Gracious, mamma! what's the note about?" cried the girls.

"Your sister's been and killed herself!" sobbed the excited lady. "If she had taken my advice—" But such a shriek rose from the two girls, that the admiral heard it, and opened the dining-room door.

"Nonsense, mamma!" Julia exclaimed, angrily. "How can you frighten one so? It's nothing of the sort. Be quiet, Lizzie. Hen's all right at Vivian Court. Read what Mrs. Vivian says. Tell the groom to wait," she said, turning to the servant; "I must write an answer."

By the time Lizzie had mastered the tenor of Mrs. Vivian's crabbed writing, the admiral had entered the room, and was inquiring in a highly metaphorical manner what the noise was about.

Mrs. Maurice, dissolved in tears, still adhered to her original proposition that Henrietta had killed herself, and that she had foreseen it. The admiral, having read the note, exclaimed in his gruffest voice, "Serve her exactly right!" and ordered his boots to be brought immediately.

"Oh, my dear," whimpered Mrs. Maurice, "if you go, I must go too. Lizzie, please ring for Jane to come and help me to pack; and, Julia, will you mind looking out Henrietta's nightcap, and brushes, and combs, and things? She is very orderly, and you won't have much trouble in finding what you want. I wouldn't ask you, my dear, only—" And here Mrs. Maurice became speechless once more behind her pocket-handkerchief.

"Goodness, mamma! don't cry like that. You will get such a splitting headache," said Julia, in her most authoritative manner. "There's not the least necessity. Papa, you are not thinking of going to Vivian Court to-night; you'll only disturb Mrs. Vivian, for she evidently doesn't expect you, as she says she hopes to see you to-morrow morning. If you go to to-night, you'll find her just going to bed; now see if you don't."

Admiral Maurice thought there was something in that, certainly; and, turning round on his wife, desired her to stop that noise, and not make such a fool of herself; whereupon Mrs. Maurice wept the more, and said she had always said it would be so, and the admiral should have used his authority to prevent Henrietta sacrificing herself.

Invoking confusion upon the race of idiots in general, and his wife in particular, the admiral fled the room, and was heard no more till prayer-time, when he confounded Wallis for being three minutes late, and read through the morning instead of the evening prayers to the end without discovering his mistake, a thing which he had never been known to do within any body's memory, and which, Lizzie pertly remarked, ought to be made do for the next morning.

Black care sat on Julia's pillow that night, and

for many nights after. Not in the shape of anxiety for Henrietta, nor of misgivings on the subject of her correspondence with Herbert Waldron; but in the guise of a long bill at her dressmaker's, which she had no means of settling. Since her return from France she had resumed the post of housekeeper, delegated during her absence to Henrietta, who, like an honest fool, had been in the habit of accounting strictly for every farthing she spent. Julia knew better. Under different names, her eau-de-cologne and Jockey Club and her Jouvin's gloves always went down in the accounts, and so far so good. But that only helped as a drop in her bucket. The dressmaker was tired of waiting, and threatened to apply to the admiral. Julia wanted a ten-pound note to stop the woman's mouth with, and knew no way of getting one unless by robbing her father's cash-box, which was scarcely practicable. So Julia did not sleep well that night, nor many nights after; and she began to tremble when the post came in of a morning.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

DR. JENKINS came to see Henrietta on the morrow, and the next day, and the next day after that; then he prescribed repose for a few days longer, and when they were past he repeated the prescription; and so on for more than a fortnight. It was good fun for Lizzie and Julia to walk up every day and make themselves at home, under pretence of nursing Hen; but whether the patient enjoyed herself very much is not on record.

There was but little to be done. Mrs. Maurice came to see her the morning after Mrs. Vivian had taken possession of her, and went into such a fit of crying that she had to be taken away and dosed with sal-volatile. Seeing her so overcome had the effect of sending Henrietta into hysterics for the first time in her life; and altogether there was noise enough and rushing about enough above stairs, for an hour or so, to make Mrs. Vivian long for solitude again.

But when Henrietta had lain on her back for three weeks, and was no better, Mrs. Vivian's faith in Dr. Jenkins began to wane, and she wrote to ask her son's advice, addressing her letter under cover to his lawyer's chambers in Regent Street.

She had written to him at length after what she was pleased to call her adventure on the moor, but had received no answer, nor indeed had she expected any, since her son was travelling on the Continent on business. Now, to her great surprise, she received an answer dated from the house in Hyde Park Gardens, saying briefly that he had received her former note, and that his business had not taken him farther than London after all. The letter continued thus:

"You seem to be very anxious about this young lady whom you are nursing. If it would be a satisfaction to you, and her friends make no objection, bring her up to London most certainly, my dear mother. This house is as much your home as Vivian Court, and I hope you will bring whom you like, and do what you like, and in fact behave as a mother should who knows she can trust her son in all things. Do you want more

money? Do you want any thing? Remember, my mother, that between us two there can never be any question of *meum* and *tuum*. I do not see any good in all this money, except that I can gratify every wish my mother takes into her old head, and that a great number of wretched beings may be made less wretched by it. That is all the good it is ever likely to do me, and that, after all, is what every great gift is intended for. So it is all right.

"If you carry out your contemplated plan—your note seems to say you wait for my decision; I have said what that is—you must bring some of the servants with you, of course; just those that my uncle and Lady Caroline were in the habit of bringing to town with them. The housekeeper will know about every thing, I doubt not. Still, if you would like me to come down to be your escort, say so.

"Don't make any delays. I see you are anxious, and I don't like my old mother to worry herself a moment longer than is necessary about any thing or any body; certainly not for a strange young lady picked up by the roadside. No offense to her, though. I shall expect you on the second evening after you get my letter, and I have already written an order for an invalid carriage to be sent down immediately to Vivian Court, as I thought you might possibly like one for your friend, and not be able to get such a thing down in the country without much delay."

"My dear, dear boy! God bless him!" said the widow, wiping her eyes after she read this letter.

She put on her bonnet and drove over to Wembury Hall, leaving Julia to keep guard over her patient. Mrs. Maurice was thanking her for her kindness, and acquiescing in every thing she proposed, when the admiral walked in, and knocked the whole scheme on the head by declaring once for all that he couldn't think of it; that he couldn't be under such a tremendous obligation to any body, not even an old friend. Henrietta must come back, and they must do their best for her.

"Dear me, yes," said Mrs. Maurice, going off on another tack; "now one comes to think of it, she has been away a long time, and, as my husband says, she ought to come home. We are very grateful to you for your kindness to her, dear Mrs. Vivian, but, as my husband says—"

"Now," said Mrs. Vivian, who could be as determined as the admiral when she chose, "just hear me. I believe, myself, that my meeting with your daughter as I did was quite providential. I was wearying in the midst of plenty for want of something to do, and just as I was thinking I couldn't bear it any longer—one can't knit all day long in such weather as this, you know—I was provided with an occupation. I said to myself then that the hand of Providence was in it, and I say so now. Now, admiral, don't interrupt me yet. Mrs. Maurice, I want you and the admiral to take a common-sense view of the matter. Here am I, with a deal of time on my hands, and all alone; with a deal of money, and nothing to do with it. As I said, you know"—turning to Mrs. Maurice—"one can't knit forever, and one can't wear more than one gown at a time, can one? Now here's a little opportunity for doing good that falls in my way, and why should you

two prevent my doing it because you've only known me months instead of years? You would think it was all right if it was some poor girl that I had got hold of; and don't young ladies deserve as much petting and care when they are ill as those of the poorer class? And this dear girl, too, that has brought on her illness by her devotedness to the poor, doesn't she merit good nursing more than another?"

"Confounded folly! Better have staid at home," growled the admiral. "I don't approve of all that meddling with the lower classes; and I know she only went among 'em out of obstinacy."

"Ah, well, admiral," Mrs. Vivian returned briskly, "we can but do what we believe to be right in this world, and hope we are not in the wrong after all. Anyhow, I've got this dear girl to take care of, and I intend to keep her. Why, I've had nobody to nurse since my son Louis had the measles when he was fourteen! And such a dear fellow he was to nurse; so thankful for every thing I did to make him comfortable. And your daughter is quite as good. Dr. Jenkins said she was obstinate and would not attend to him. I can only say she does every thing I tell her. I don't believe he understands the case, and I tell you, admiral, I must and will take her to London, and my son has sent down an invalid carriage for her, and you must let her go."

And Mrs. Vivian carried her point. Two days later she was settled with her invalid in the mansion in Hyde Park Gardens, and was putting her son through a severe examination as to the merits of the most celebrated doctors.

Louis was surprisingly ignorant on the subject. He said he didn't know of any: which naturally put his mother in a pet.

"To think of your living all the years you have in London, and not to know who's clever!" she cried.

"I do know a clever fellow," said her son.

"Then why did you say you didn't?"

"Because his is not of the kind of cleverness that keeps his carriage, and so you women wouldn't believe in him, perhaps," said Louis.

"You women." Mrs. Vivian had never heard him say such a sarcastic thing before. "*You women!*"

"Nonsense," she said. "If you are satisfied about this man—"

"I believe him to have an unequalled potentiality for keeping his carriage," said Louis.

"What's that? I can't make you out at all. Well, what is this man's address?"

And, ignoring the aristocracy of the medical brotherhood, Mrs. Vivian sent a note to Vaughan Street, requesting Dr. Vandeleur's attendance.

Dr. Vandeleur came, saw the patient, took his fee, and departed. This went on for about a fortnight, and Henrietta got no better, but rather worse. The slight color that had come into her face the first few days of her being in London was quite gone, and had left her paler, if possible, than she was before. Mrs. Vivian was in a puzzle, and resolved, if there were not a change for the better in a few days, to have another opinion. She told her son this, and Louis said, by all means let her call in any body she liked; for himself, if he were dying he would trust in Vandeleur to bring him round, if man could do it. But before Mrs. Vivian had quite got to the day

on which she proposed notifying to the doctor her sense of his insufficiency, Louis made a discovery.

In the drawing-room where Henrietta lay when she was dressed was a large bow-window looking south, and filled with stands for plants, a fernery, and a large vivarium, Louis's last hobby. One day he was stooping over this, absorbed in watching the manœuvres of two prawns, when he was startled by hearing a low sobbing from Henrietta's corner of the room, and then the words, "Oh, Jack, Jack, to think that you didn't know me!" in a sort of despairing wail. It must be observed that the bow was divided from the body of the room by lace and silken curtains which could be drawn back at pleasure. This morning they had been drawn completely across, to make the rest of the room cooler for the invalid. Louis was in a dilemma. She had evidently imagined herself quite alone; and he could not get away from where he was, except by the drawing-room; and how very uncomfortable to be a forced listener to a lady's soliloquy! He began to think he had better throw something down, and was looking to see which plant of all those within reach could best be devoted to destruction, when the open window met his eye. He went softly to it, threw it up to its full height, stepped out on the balcony and in again, making a great deal of noise in the proceeding. Then he went across the room, shook hands with Henrietta, and made the never-failing observations on the weather in, as he flattered himself, a most matter-of-course, unconscious manner. Then he began talking about his vivarium, and Henrietta, who had listened listlessly at first, grew animated, and said, half raising herself, "How I wish I could see those prawns swimming?"

And why should she not? asked Louis. Would she take his arm to the other end of the room? Henrietta said Yes, and then drew back and said No, she must not disobey the doctor's orders. "Just for once," pleaded Louis, who really wanted to please the invalid, besides wishing to show off his prawns. But Henrietta was firm, saying that it would not be fair to Dr. Vandeleur to walk, when he had desired her on no account to do so. And as she said this the color shot into her cheeks for a second, and her voice sounded less monotonous than usual. "I'll tell you what," said Louis, getting interested in her face—for so people did, if ever she gave them a chance—"I'll get you a small vivarium on a stand, which you can have drawn close to your sofa. That will amuse you for hours together if your tastes lie at all that way."

"You are very kind, but you must not take all that trouble for me," said Henrietta.

Louis was demonstrating that it would be no trouble at all, and that the large vivarium must be weeded in order to keep up the balance of life therein, when Dr. Vandeleur was announced, and he had to defer his demonstration and take himself off for the time.

Dr. Vandeleur put his hat and gloves on the table, and sat himself down with his back to the window, so that the light fell upon the patient's head. He took a very deliberate look at her, and thought to himself, "Bless my soul, how gray her hair is getting, poor thing!"

But he said, "How do you feel to-day, Miss Maurice?"

the time for a ride. Oh, how I should enjoy one!"

"To be sure," said Sir Louis, looking up from the vivarium, "of course you would. I never thought of that. I have been very busy lately, but now I'm going to have a holiday. What do you say to a ride this afternoon?"

"The very thing. It would be lovely," said she.

Sir Louis rang to give orders about the horses. "Does your sister, Miss Lizzie, ride?" he asked, when the footman appeared. Julia answered that she did, and Sir Louis ordered his own horse and two with ladies' saddles to be brought round at three o'clock; and then, scarcely heeding Julia's thanks, he again applied himself to observing the habits of his water-pets. Julia thought she had never met with a man so completely out of her reach. If he would but talk! If he would but look at her, instead of poking his nose so persistently close to the water!

The pet prawn having hidden himself for a time under a weed, Louis lifted up his head, and seeing Miss Maurice still there, said, "You can not think what curious fellows they are—the prawns, I mean."

"I dare say," Julia replied. "I wish I were not so ignorant of natural history. I should so like to have a vivarium. Is it easily managed?"

This was the luckiest question she could have asked. Louis began relating his first experiences with his marine guests, and Julia was astonished to hear the luncheon-bell ring before he had exhausted the subject. It was interesting to hear him talk, that was undeniable. Pity the subject had not been better chosen. Those crawling, darting creatures were enough to give one the shivers. But she had made him talk to her. That was one point gained. And he behaved "decently," as Lizzie phrased it, all luncheon-time; that is to say, he was fully conscious of the Miss Maurices' presence.

"What's your little game?" asked Lizzie of her sister one evening as they were dressing for dinner. The afternoon rides had become quite a thing of course by this time, and Mrs. Vivian was again in a state of alarm for Louis. But of this the young ladies were as yet unaware.

"My little game?" said Julia, meditatively. "Well, really, Liz, I hardly know myself."

"Oh, nonsense! What did you mean by going into fits of admiration over Hen's patience, and all the rest of it? It looks as if you wanted to recommend her, as it were, to Sir Louis. I'm sure he thinks highly enough of her as it is. If you observe, he'll wake himself up, as one may say, to talk to her; and he remembers little things that she likes. But any attention to us always seems as if 'twas forced. Now, yesterday he kept us waiting for our ride, because, if you please, he was busy writing, and it had slipped his memory; and for all the conversation we had, the groom might as well have ridden with us instead. I hate the man!"

"I feel very much inclined to do so sometimes," Julia said; "but on second thoughts I refrain. Don't you see, Liz, I'm tired of my name, and I want a change?"

"That's no news. What next?"

"I mean to change it for one with a title. I have a fancy for being presented at Court; for a diamond necklace, and so forth; for calling a

house such as this mine, for example. When I have a plan, I generally carry it out, unless the Fates positively say 'No.' As to this one in particular, I've only got it in outline as yet. You know one can't always calculate how other people may behave. If this man had been like any other man, my affair would have been settled by this time. However, there he is, and there is Vivian Court, and the Vivian jewels, and this house, and I mean to enjoy it all before I die."

"He! You won't enjoy *him* much, I should think," sneered Lizzie.

"You goose! Won't there be place enough for him and me here? He'll be useful, too, if he isn't ornamental. It's a very useful thing to have a husband when one wants to enjoy life."

"But people make a row if a married woman flirts much."

"More fool she, I say. If you do the thing properly, there never need be any row."

The dinner-bell rang after that, and they had to hurry. But before they left the room, Lizzie repeated her question: "What on earth did you mean by praising Henrietta?"

"I meant to make him talk, and I knew he would wake up and talk to me about her when he wouldn't about any thing else. He likes her, and I—of course, I like her. So there's a subject in common directly."

"What a clever one you are! Now that would never have entered my head," said Lizzie, passing her arm round her sister's waist. Sir Louis came into the drawing-room as they were standing looking at a picture in the same attitude, and thought, "a pair of empty-headed creatures, but fond of each other;" and being no longer absorbed in the statistics of lunacy, he made himself agreeable, and talked all dinner-time. "This comes of the rides they have been taking," thought Mrs. Vivian, and resolved to put a stop to them.

"I have been neglecting you altogether, my dears," said this artful woman, as soon as she had them to herself in the drawing-room. "You haven't been to the Royal Academy, have you? Well, then, we'll have a long day there to-morrow. I am sure you will enjoy seeing all the new pictures."

"If it's a fine day," Lizzie put in. "There won't be a possibility of seeing them if the sky is as cloudy as it was yesterday."

Mrs. Vivian was prepared for that emergency.

"If it rains," said she, "we'll go to the morning concert at Willis's Rooms. Either way, you shall not be disappointed."

"I'm sure I shan't go," Lizzie said aside; "my best bonnet isn't fit for a morning concert."

Mrs. Vivian heard something like a dissent. "What's in the way?" she asked.

"She got her best bonnet damaged with the rain last time she wore it," observed Julia; "and she can't buy another, because she's particular about not exceeding her allowance; and her allowance doesn't afford her more than one best bonnet for the summer."

This was true. Lizzie had, as yet, a wholesome fear of exceeding her allowance.

"Quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Vivian, approvingly. "My dear child," she said, turning to Lizzie, "you are beginning life on a right principle. You may find it a little inconvenient

to adhere to at times, but be firm, my dear—be firm, and you will be glad afterwards. My dear, I have known people professing religion, whose peace of mind and whose influence as Christians were both lost, because of their want of firmness in going without things their purses were not long enough for. My dears, both of you," she continued, laying her hand on Julia's arm, "let the rule of your whole life be, 'Keep out of debt.' It has been my rule through life, and I have found it answer."

"I should think it was easy enough to go without a new bonnet," said Henrietta from her sofa.

"That's all you know about it," retorted Lizzie.

"No," says Mrs. Vivian, "it does not come easy to every one. To those whose faces are set Zionwards, it ought; but even Christians often think too much of their poor perishing bodies, so what can be expected from the unconverted?"

This was the first time Mrs. Vivian had had a fair opportunity of being "faithful," as her phrase was; and it was too good a one to be let slip. Julia listened with becoming gravity, and frowned at Lizzie when the latter would have taken up a picture-book. Lizzie composed herself in an attitude of attention with rather a bad grace; but Mrs. Vivian was too much taken up with her subject to notice the half pout on the girl's lip. There was silence till she had said her say, and that was all she wanted.

The next morning was gloriously bright, and the sisters told each other at breakfast, by one of those telegraphic signals they use at home, that there was no help for it; they were doomed to go and see the pictures with Mrs. Vivian. Sir Louis did not know of the plan yet, though. He had spent the evening before in the library, instead of coming to the drawing-room to talk.

Julia resolved to give him a hint. "We are going out this morning," said she as Mrs. Vivian was pouring out the coffee.

"Coffee or tea, my dear?" asked her hostess, cutting her short.

"Coffee, please. We are going to see the pictures. Will you let me have that beautiful opera-glass that's in the drawing-room? New pictures tire one's eyes so."

Sir Louis made no answer. He was reading a letter. When she spoke to him he was apparently looking at the portrait of Lady Caroline Vivian above the mantel-piece; but the contents of the letter filled his mind so completely as to take off all consciousness of being addressed. He stared full at the portrait for a minute, and then down at his letter again. Mrs. Vivian answered for him: "You can have the opera-glass certainly, my dear. My son didn't know you spoke to him. He is absorbed in his letters, you see. I never speak to him, myself, while he is reading letters. It distracts him so."

Julia bit her lip, and looked daggers at Mrs. Vivian for one instant.

"I beg pardon, mother; did you speak to me?" said Sir Louis, suddenly waking up to the fact of its being breakfast-time.

"Coffee or tea, my dear?" asked his mother.

"Tea, please. Nothing like tea. Mother, should you like to have a Russian urn?"

Mrs. Vivian replied cautiously that she knew nothing about the virtues of Russian urns, and breakfast proceeded in silence, for Julia had fallen

into a fit of sulkiness at Sir Louis's gross inattention, and Lizzie was watching her. The baronet drank off his tea, gathered up his letters, and retreated to the library, not one whit the wiser as to the game at cross-purposes which had been played under his very nose.

Mrs. Vivian carried the girls off early, leaving a new book for Henrietta. First she took them to a milliner's, and presented each with a new bonnet. "It was lucky you made me pretend to listen to her lecture last night," said Lizzie, as she tripped after her sister to the carriage, in all the consciousness of having on her head a love of a magenta *capote* which would attract notice, and make the portraits on the walls of the academy grow pale as she passed. Julia made the most of her thanks for both. "Dear Liz is so overjoyed at the wonderful fact of a second new bonnet," said she, "that her mind won't take in any thing yet. She is so young; only just out, you know. But I do feel it so kind of you, dear Mrs. Vivian. I remember well how, as a very young girl, I have felt mortified at not being quite as smart as other people, and I feel so sorry for poor dear little Liz; and I couldn't have made her the present of a bonnet, you know, because my allowance is scarcely large enough for my own necessities. Thank you for my new bonnet, too."

"Don't say a word, my dear," said Mrs. Vivian, pleased nevertheless at having so much said about it, and at the way Julia looked and spoke of her sister.

They got to the rooms without any of the pushing and crowding that Mrs. Vivian had feared in her secret heart, but had resolved to brave rather than bespeak her son's protection, and have him dangle round those girls. But they were unfashionably early; and the girls felt ashamed of themselves as they walked through the nearly empty rooms. Mrs. Vivian was not ashamed in the least. She bought three catalogues, and proposed to take a look round first, and then to begin at the beginning, and go through in an orderly manner. The exhibition was as great a novelty to her as to Lizzie. It was her first London season, too. But she purposed taking the enjoyment in a solid, creeping, grub-like fashion, as became a woman who knew she was nought but a worm; and Lizzie received a grave reprimand for rushing across the room to look at a mass of crude color which she dignified by the epithet of "brilliant," instead of following in Mrs. Vivian's train, reading the descriptions in the catalogue before looking at the pictures, and taking them in the order they came—good, bad, and indifferent.

"You really must keep quiet, Liz," said her sister, after Mrs. Vivian had recalled her for the third time. "You'll get us both into disgrace if you don't; the old lady's looking black already."

"I am so tired of crawling on in this dull way," pleaded Lizzie. "I wish we had never come. I wish we were going for our ride. I feel ready to cry."

"Nonsense, child. You are only paying for your bonnet. I paid for mine at breakfast; I won't forget it in a hurry either."

"I don't care a bit for my bonnet; my head aches," pouted the fickle Lizzie. The rooms were fast filling now, and getting very hot, so that there was some excuse for her irritability.

"Dear me, this is very interesting," observed

Mrs. Vivian, looking up from her catalogue, and repeating from it, "No. 110, *Waiting for an Answer*." Now, that's the kind of thing I like. You see exactly what it means the first time you look. Even without the catalogue you'd know the serving-man couldn't be doing any thing *but* wait for an answer, now, wouldn't you? Dear me! The window in the background reminds me so much of one at Vivian Court; the staircase-window, you know, my dear. And that staircase to the left is the very image of ours. Oh! it can't be, though, because it would be in the centre. Let me see—"

But they were suddenly forced onward by the throng pressing toward a painting of Millais's. Mrs. Vivian lost her place in the catalogue, dropped a glove, and got—as she expressed it—flustered. "Keep close, keep close," she said hurriedly to the two girls, as they were borne on in the stream far from No. 110, where the serving-man was waiting for the answer.

Mrs. Vivian began to feel tired, now that her attention had been called away from the pictures.

"I'll sit down there," she said, pointing to a seat in a comparatively empty corner. "Don't go far, my dears, for fear the crowd should come this way."

"Come, Liz," said Julia, "we'll try to find a staircase like the one at—"

She had turned her head as she spoke, and now stood transfixed by a face which appeared in the doorway. Lizzie cried out, for she had turned quite white in an instant, and dropped her parasol.

"Come back," she whispered, seizing Lizzie's arm. "Hush! I'll tell you by-and-by." And she dragged her, keeping her on the side next the doorway, back to Mrs. Vivian. "Stand before me," she whispered, as she dropped on the bench close by her chaperone, cowering down so that no by-stander should notice her; and yet, after an instant, peeping at the doorway under favor of Lizzie's arm, upraised to hold the opera-glass.

"Thank goodness!" she muttered, with a sigh of relief. The face was gone.

"Are you better, Ju?" said Lizzie, turning round.

Julia nodded, and asked for the opera-glass. While she was scanning the crowd beyond the doorway, Lizzie suddenly touched her arm, saying in a low voice, "Look, look!"

"Where?" said her sister impatiently.

"There! Why, I see him as plain as possible; he is coming straight towards us. What fun! our dear old chaperone is fast asleep."

"I can't see. Coming straight here, you said. Sit down, Liz. No, stand up. Let me sit. Stand before me. He won't know you. How shall I get out of this?" And she sank down again, muttering, "What a fool I was to send that letter!"

"Not know me? What are you talking about?" said Lizzie.

"Of course not. You were quite a child then. Oh, I hope he won't see me. Tell me what he looks like when he's near, Liz."

"What stuff!" exclaimed Lizzie; "it's Sir Louis I was speaking of. Why, have you seen any body you don't want to see?" Lizzie, feeling now that there was a little mystery to account for Julia's paleness and incoherence, was sud-

denly seized with a sharp fit of curiosity, and resolved that if Julia did not satisfy it, she would do so herself, and begin by mastering the contents of that odd little box which had remained locked, in one of the drawers of Julia's room, all the time she was abroad.

"Sir Louis! I thought you meant Herbert Waldron. How you frightened me, child! Hush! I'll tell you about it this evening."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEREIN WEDDINGS ARE DISCERNED AFAR OFF.

HENRIETTA was lying as usual in the drawing-room, with the book on her lap, and the miniature vivarium by her side, but neither reading nor watching the sea-anemones. Her face was very still, and her eyes were shut. She was thinking. The lady's-maid came in and peeped at her, and was stealing out again on tiptoe, when she suddenly opened her eyes and asked the hour.

"Past three, miss. Dr. Vandeleur is coming up, miss; I thought you were asleep, and I was going to tell him so."

"Ask him to come in," said Henrietta, beginning to tremble from head to foot, but trying hard to keep herself quiet. She gave him her hand without speaking, and pointed to a chair. Dr. Vandeleur had not seen her alone since the day when he had asked whether he might write to ask her father's consent to their engagement. Her lips had scarcely breathed a "yes" when Lizzie had broken the *tête-à-tête* by her untimely entrance, and had commented so rudely on it afterwards.

"It was a perfect godsend," said he, sitting down just opposite her, "that I thought of calling to-day on the chance of finding every body out. I should have written if I had been forced to let this day pass without speaking to you."

"Oh, Jack, I am glad you did not," said she flushing. "People are so prying, and do say such things, and—"

"Let them pry," returned Vandeleur; "if they do, they won't find out any thing worse than that two old sweethearts had a quarrel when they were young and silly, and made it all straight the instant they cut their wisdom teeth."

Henrietta laughed. "How late have yours come?" she asked. "I cut mine when I was four-and-twenty."

"One isn't particular to a year or so, you know. Well, Henrietta, I wrote to the admiral, and the admiral has replied with a promptitude worthy a better cause. I suppose the long and the short of it is, that you're such a charming daughter that he can't make up his mind to part with you for a permanency. The feeling does him honor, I admit; but we must convince him between us that it mustn't be carried too far. We must steal a march on him, Henrietta, and give him a son-in-law whether he likes it or not." He was rattling on, when she stopped him.

"Don't!" She hid her face on the cushion, and began to cry quietly, with her hands clasped tight, as if she were in terrible pain.

Dr. Vandeleur took a hasty turn across the room. "Confound that pig-headed old marti-

net!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to let that upset you, Henrietta, surely? My asking him at all was only a polite form. I've considered myself an engaged man ever since the other day; and his letter doesn't make one atom of difference to me. Why on earth should it to you either?"

"Because he is my father, you know," she said, crying.

Dr. Vandeleur came and took hold of her hands. "Henrietta, look at me, my dear. Tell me, now. You care for me, don't you?"

"Why ask?" she said, crying still. He knew how much she cared for him. She never, never could have married any body else.

"That will do," said he, kissing her forehead.

"Thank you, dear, for saying that. Now I put it to your own good sense: ought we two, who have been waiting a precious long time as it is, to be kept waiting any longer on account of one old gentleman's obstinacy? There are bounds even to parental authority; or if not, there ought to be. You are arrived at years of discretion, and ought to judge for yourself."

"There is this to be said, Jack," she replied, forcing herself to be calm. "I am the eldest. I have never had any thing to do with the bringing-up of my sisters; and I have never given them a good example in any thing that I know of. Papa is dreadfully strict in some things; in others they have their own way. We are a curious household, Jack. I suppose we have an interest in each other in a certain way, but—no, I won't criticise. I have lived apart from them, as it were, and they neither know me nor I them, rightly. I will only say, that I am sure if I married without papa's consent it would have a bad influence on the girls. They would quote my behavior as an excuse for their own, supposing a match to be on the *tapis* for one of them to which papa's consent could not be gained. They would not choose to believe that a woman may do at thirty what she may not at eighteen. And then papa would say it was all my fault. And—and—I could not bear that. Do you understand me, Jack?"

"I understand that you are the most crotchety creature I ever had to deal with," said he. "Do you mean to say you won't have me for fear of one of the young ones making a stolen match? Depend upon it, my dear, if any of them are inclined that way, it will come to pass without the stimulus of your example. I think you are treating me very badly, upon my word, Henrietta."

Henrietta cried out that she knew it, but what could she do! She must remember that obedience to parents was a divine command.

"No, it was not," roared Vandeleur, walking to and fro. Not after a certain limit. And that limit had been passed. Not all the fathers in creation should make him believe that it wasn't, and he wouldn't see Henrietta's whole life sacrificed and take it quietly. He should write to the admiral and give him a piece of his mind.

"No, dear; don't do that, please," she said. "It would only make him angry. It is very hard, very hard for both of us, but I think—I hope—I am doing right. Say good-bye now, dear Jack, and go—"

"I shall do nothing of the sort," quoth Vandeleur; "you lie back and be silent, or I shall have you fainting."

"I had better go back to Devonshire," Henrietta continued; "I wish, oh, I do wish I had never come here. I thought I had got accustomed to my loneliness, and now—"

The sentence broke off there in a long sigh; and Dr. Vandeleur rang for the lady's-maid and sal-volatile, for Henrietta had fainted. Miss Pin-cot was awed into calmness by the doctor's presence, and did all that was required without any flourishing. He staid till Henrietta had regained consciousness, and then desired Pincoot to find out when Mrs. Vivian would be home, as he wished to see her, and would wait in the morning-room till she came. He had waited only a quarter of an hour, when the roll of a carriage and a succeeding knock told of an arrival.

Henrietta was aware of it too. Her hearing had become painfully acute. Although the drawing-room door was shut, she heard distinctly the opening and shutting of the front door, the little commotion in the hall, the voices of Sir Louis and her sisters, Mrs. Vivian's mention of her own name. A moment after they all entered; Lizzie, once more in love with her new bonnet, crying out to her to admire it; Julia with an air of triumph, and a beaming smile for Sir Louis, who seemed as inexorably grave as ever; and Mrs. Vivian, full of interjections at the instructiveness of the exhibition, and inquiries as to how she had managed to amuse herself during their absence.

The lady's-maid came forward and whispered mysteriously to Mrs. Vivian, who listened, shook her head, desired that Henrietta might not be excited, and as mysteriously left the room. Lizzie impulsively demanded what was the matter, and Sir Louis, hinting that possibly Miss Maurice might wish to be left alone, prepared to act on his hint; but Henrietta, chiding herself for allowing nervous fancies to get the upper hand of her, entreated them to remain and tell her how they had enjoyed themselves. Julia proposed to have tea brought up, and Sir Louis gave the necessary order, saying to the two young ladies as he did so, "I shall take the reins of government in my mother's absence; and it is hereby enacted that only one speaks at a time."

"Liz may begin," said Julia. Lizzie scarcely waited for the permission. First the bonnet, then the pictures, the people, the heat; on she ran, without a single stop. "And only to think of it! Julia—"

"Stop," said Julia. "Let me tell my own story, please." But there were two incidents which she left unmentioned. One was, the face she had seen in the doorway. The other was what had given her that look of triumph with which she had entered the room.

It was this. Sir Louis had stumbled upon them, as he said, by mere chance. Mrs. Vivian, suddenly roused from her slumbers, had inquired suspiciously how he had found them out; to which he answered, that he had been led to infer their whereabouts from the fact of the carriage being outside. Mrs. Vivian immediately rose up, anxious to go, but the girls pleaded for a last look, and, begging his mother to sit still and rest, Sir Louis offered an arm to each, and took them into a room of which they had had no more than a hasty glimpse before. A picture caught Lizzie's eye, and she begged them to stop. She had left her catalogue on the bench by Mrs. Vivian, and

was making conjecture upon conjecture as to the probable subject, when Julia said, "I feel sure it's some place I have seen in the south of France." And turning suddenly to Sir Louis—"By-the-by, that reminds me, Sir Louis: when are you going to return me that portfolio of water-color drawings I lent you ever so long ago?"

"The water-color drawings?" he repeated, as if in doubt.

"To be sure. Have you lost them?" And then, judging from his face that they were lost, she continued, "I call that rather too bad of you!"

"I did not say they were lost," said he.

"Well, you looked it. You looked as if you didn't know where to lay your hand upon them—as if you were not sure whether you had ever had them."

"I am sure of that much, nevertheless. Should you take their loss very much to heart? They were the gift of a friend, you said."

"Well—yes, a friend. I don't suppose I should break my heart if I never met her again, but she gave me the drawings; they are my property, and I don't like people losing what is mine."

"You would not break your heart for this friend—wise Miss Julia Maurice. But you have a keen sense of proprietorship—even of an old portfolio of drawings."

"Of course I have. Would not you?"

"Suppose we settle it amicably, thus. Choose any picture you please, in exchange for this old portfolio I have—mislaid." This was said in the driest manner possible.

"You don't mean it!" Lizzie put in. "Any picture?"

"Miss Lizzie, if you were a gentleman I should be obliged to call you out for doubting my veracity."

Julia looked all round the room. "I'll have that one," she said, pointing to a wide stretch of orange sunset, inclosed in a gorgeous frame.

Sir Louis took out his pocket-book and wrote down the number. "And now," he said, "we had better go back to my tower."

This was the incident Julia passed over in silence.

Mrs. Vivian seemed wrapped in mystery after her interview with the doctor. She did not return to the drawing-room till the tea was cold, and when she did, she astonished them all by walking straight up to Henrietta and kissing her. Then she poured herself out a cup, and drank it with an expression of determination which seemed more than the occasion absolutely required. Her son, sitting opposite, noticed this, and asked her whether she was planning a conspiracy against any person or persons, to which she only replied by a shake of the head and the ejaculation "Stuff!" At dinner she began her own soup before helping her son, and on his remonstrating mildly at such undeserved neglect, merely said, "I beg your pardon," and helped him, instead of making a little joke of it. In the evening, instead of sitting with the everlasting knitting in her hands, trying to keep up a conversation with the girls, she told them to amuse themselves in their own way, and retired to the writing-table, whence the sound of a scratching pen proceeded at intervals for more than an hour. At the end of that time, she tore up the sheets on which she had written, and left the room, taking them with her.

Lizzie was at the piano, trying over the contents of the music-books. "What's come to the old lady?" she exclaimed, stopping short in her performance of Thalberg's "Home, sweet home" as the door closed on Mrs. Vivian.

"I dare say she can't write because of your putting in all those false notes in the bass," said Julia ironically.

Lizzie did not contradict, for Julia's criticisms met with unbounded respect from the entire family at Wembury. If Henrietta or Mrs. Maurice had ventured to hint at a false bass, there would have been a storm. But as it was Julia who spoke, Lizzie shut the piano, and came over to where her sister sat, saying mournfully, "How I wish I could have some lessons!"

"You might play better than that without lessons, if you took the trouble to look at the notes."

"Oh, I dare say." And Lizzie yawned at the idea. "I do so hate bother, Ju."

"Then you'll never get on in life, that's all," retorted Julia, whose face was dark, now that Sir Louis was not in the way. She had a heap of the *Times* newspapers by her, and was looking narrowly down every column for some piece of intelligence; vainly, it might be supposed, from the hanging of her lower lip and the drumming of her foot as she threw aside one sheet after the other.

"What are you searching for in those old papers?" said Lizzie.

Julia frowned angrily, and pointed to the other end of the room where Henrietta lay reading. "She hears every thing," she muttered, under cover of the broad paper.

"I forgot. She does hear awfully quick," answered Lizzie, behind the same screen. "I vote we go to bed early."

Henrietta might have heard the last words. She suddenly spoke. "If Mrs. Vivian does not come up presently, will you ring and ask them to tell her I want particularly to speak to her before I go to sleep to-night? What o'clock is it?"

"Ten, I should think," said Julia, not taking the trouble to look, and going on with her search.

"What do you want her for?" said Lizzie.

Henrietta might have delivered a lecture (to the air) on the bad taste of asking questions, when Mrs. Vivian entered, as brisk as usual, and very smiling; quite divested of the mystery which had enwrapped her since the afternoon.

"I was asking for you," said Henrietta.

"Me, my dear?" and Mrs. Vivian walked up to the sofa and gave her a kiss.

"The second to-day! Well, what next?" quoth Lizzie aside to her sister. Julia put her papers down and listened.

"Well, my love?" says Mrs. Vivian, cheerfully.

"I wanted to say that I must think now about going home. London has done all it can for me, and time will do the rest. I do thank you for all your kindness, dear Mrs. Vivian. I shall never forget it: your kindness to me and to my sisters—like a friend of years' standing, instead of months'."

As she said this, Julia started up, and stood with her teeth set, staring hard at her sister.

"Fool!" she muttered, clenching her hands to keep down the sudden passion that swelled her throat. She had turned pale, paler than when she had seen the face in the doorway.

Lizzie, staring at her in sudden fear and wonder, heard Mrs. Vivian say, "No, no, no; you must not talk of going yet, my dear. I have been much pleased to have you, and you must stay a while longer."

Julia's face never relaxed. Probably she expected the reply that came.

"You are most kind, but I feel that I ought to go home now. I have made up my mind that it is best; so please don't ask me to stay."

"Sleep over it, my dear," was all Mrs. Vivian said. "When you have done with Pincot, send her to me, for I am going to retire early. I find a picture exhibition a fatiguing thing, not being accustomed to it, you know."

Lizzie pulled her sister's dress. "For goodness' sake," she whispered, "don't bid Mrs. Vivian good-night with a face like that!"

"What!" said her sister impatiently. But the warning had been heard. She shook herself free of her rage in an instant, with a little laugh, a toss of the head, and a spreading of her airy flounces. She walked across the room to shake hands, completely her old self again, except that the color in her face seemed concentrated in two scarlet spots on either cheek.

Not a word did she say to Lizzie, good or bad, for long after the lady's-maid had finished her offices and was gone. She sometimes sat, sometimes walked up and down, clenching her teeth in silent rage. By-and-by she threw herself on the sofa, saying, "Give me some sal-volatile, Liz." Lizzie searched for it among her toilet bottles, mixed it, and gave it silently.

Julia drank it down, saying, as she gave back the glass, "Henrietta deserves to be strangled."

Lizzie murmured something which sounded like "horrid old thing."

"To think of her saying that about going away, to-day of all days, that I had begun to see I was making an impression! If she had but a grain of sense! I declare, Liz, I sometimes think she is artful. This looks exactly as if it were done on purpose—on purpose to baulk me. And I will *not* be baulked. I have made up my mind that the best match in the circle in which we move shall be mine; and better there is none than this man. Look here, Liz."

And then she rapidly told the story of her engagement to Herbert Waldron.

"I've looked through the last ten days' *Times*, but I can't find any ship's arrival at Southampton which includes his name in the passenger-list, and I am in hopes that he may be all right—in India—I mean, and that what frightened me so may prove to be only an accidental resemblance. But I can't be sure till we hear from home; and even then, mamma is such a stupid correspondent she mightn't mention it, and I shouldn't care to ask. I wish to goodness I had never written to him. I wouldn't care a twopence if I didn't know what dozens of love-letters he's got of mine. 'Twas all very well just for a time, but—"

"But if you said you had changed your mind?"

"But, child, he isn't one of the sort that take things quietly. He'd make a row, and it would all come to dad's ears, and a nice mess I should be in."

"That you would! Why, the gov would box your ears as soon as look, for daring to be en-

gaged to a cousin! Besides, cousin or no cousin, it's better to be a baronet's wife with a lot of luxuries, than the wife of an officer in a regiment of the line. I think you're perfectly right, Ju." And then the change in Sir Louis's behavior was discussed, and the probable length of time that must elapse before Julia would succeed in bringing him to the point. One thing was certain. Ultimate success depended entirely upon their being thrown together for a while longer. And again Julia's anger rose against Henrietta, "that marplot!" she vehemently exclaimed. But Lizzie's eyelids began to droop, so the conference was brought to a close. "If Herbert should be in England, and call here, mind, Liz, you, not I, will see him. You would be doing me a good turn if you could make him fall in love with you; it would keep him quiet about me, you know, dear. I should think you might. You are getting prettier every day," were Julia's last words, as she laid her aching, scheming head on her pillow.

For a week or more Julia was Henrietta's constant companion, whenever she was not riding with Sir Louis, or driving with his mother. Henrietta thought it strange, but showed herself grateful for the sudden kindness. Perhaps, she thought, they might get to be fond of each other, as sisters should, in time. If only Julia would get out of that fast way of talking! But just then Julia talked very little, for a wonder, and Henrietta had no great need to feel grateful for a companionship which only resulted from the fact that indiscriminate callers were never shown into the drawing-room where she spent the day, and that thus Julia felt sure of escaping Herbert Waldron. But Herbert Waldron never came; and she could before long afford to laugh at the fright she had been in, and hear the door-bell without a shiver of apprehension. There had been no more said about Henrietta's going away, and Mrs. Vivian had had what she called a dissipated week; she had given a small dinner-party, and had taken Julia and Lizzie out twice of an evening, and they had all been at a morning concert; even Sir Louis, who had at first declared it a shocking waste of time, but had retracted when he saw the "Moonlight Sonata" set down on the programme. They had been to the British Museum, too, and had spent a whole morning listening to Sir Louis's explanations of the Egyptian remains. A highly profitable morning, Mrs. Vivian called it. An awfully dull one, the girls had thought, yawning behind their parasols. But, as Julia said, "Only get the man to talk, and she need not despair." She trotted out the Egyptians after that morning whenever there was an opportunity, and deluded the baronet into lending her a valuable book on Ancient Egypt, under the supposition that it was a subject that she was eager to study. Lizzie looked on admiringly at her sister's game, and pricked up her ears night after night, expecting to hear of an offer having been made and accepted. Mrs. Vivian saw something of the game too, but not enough to frighten her. Sir Louis's air of complete unconsciousness would have reassured her, even had she seen Julia's purpose more distinctly. And she was pre-occupied and anxious about Henrietta. After her interview with Dr. Vandeleur—when he had fully explained how he and Henrietta were situated—she had written to the admiral, begging him to reconsider his rejection of Dr. Vandeleur as a son-in-law.

Being no great letter-writer, the composition of this epistle had caused her so much trouble, and what was more, in her consideration, such a waste of cream-laid note-paper, that she had betaken herself to Sir Louis in despair. He, somewhat to her astonishment, had taken up Vandeleur's cause most enthusiastically, and, besides throwing into proper form what his mother wished to say to Admiral Maurice, had written a warm letter himself on his friend's behalf. It was the pre-occupation caused by the admiral's silence which made Mrs. Vivian blind to what she would else have seen and tried to obviate. But at last her daily question, "Any letters for me?" was answered in the affirmative. She read it hastily through, passed it on to her son, and hurried away to Henrietta's room. Sir Louis read the letter and smiled. He looked almost handsome when he smiled, ugly fellow as he was. Presently he said: "I suppose you know what has been on the *tapis* the last few days. I see that I am to congratulate you, after all. I am truly glad for Miss Maurice's sake.

Both girls could guess what was meant. But Julia, not choosing to betray how slight her real knowledge of facts was, merely said, warily, "Ah, yes! Poor dear Henrietta!"

"It is not often that you find two people so constant to each other as your sister and my friend Vandeleur," observed the baronet.

"No, indeed," said Julia with her sweetest smile. She knew all she wanted to know, now.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW CURE.

It was autumn. The songs of the treaders had ceased; the wine-press was deserted till next year's vintage; the crowd of visitors had dispersed; and Madame de Montaigu was preparing for her yearly pilgrimage to Frohsdorf.

Formerly this journey had been undertaken in company. The count's brother, his wife, and the ancient aunt of whom mention was made in a former chapter, had all gone together to pay their respects to the illustrious exile whom they styled between themselves "his majesty." But death had gradually diminished the Montaigu party. For three years madame had gone with only her husband and son. This year she must go alone; for the old count was too infirm to travel so far, and Raymond had refused to go.

It was this refusal which puckered madame's proud forehead, and made her sigh so bitterly as she looked out of her window on the plain stretching away beyond the château, all scorched up and melancholy with the three months' drought. The vintage had been most successful; so had her dinners; so had the *al fresco* entertainments and the private theatricals. Nevertheless, she was saying to herself that things were very hard on her, and that her son failed in his duty.

She had fulfilled hers, she declared, in letter and in spirit. She had accepted a mother-in-law's responsibilities without flinching, and yet here was Estelle, as unformed, as unconverted, as when Raymond brought her home in the spring a timid shrinking bride. In short, it was excessively provoking.

"I shall not take her to Frohsdorf," she had

said; "I am disappointed in my expectations of her." This was to her son, who fired up instantly.

"I don't know what expectations you may have formed. Mine are fulfilled beyond my hopes. That will console you, perhaps, for your own disappointment."

"She has no manner; she does not know how to receive—"

"She has manner enough when you are not by to make her nervous!" said he, angrily.

"And she has not given the curé any reason to expect her reconciliation. And I certainly should not think of presenting a heretic daughter-in-law to his majesty."

"So much the worse for him," was Raymond's reply.

"I shall leave her at home to take care of your father."

"And I," said Raymond, quietly, "will stay at home to take care of her. Make my humble respects to his majesty, and assure him nothing but domestic duties would have prevented me from accompanying you."

And then they had a grand quarrel, in which Raymond said some very disagreeable things, and finally came off victorious.

Madame carried her grief to Sa Grandeur, who consoled her to the best of his ability with a few pious, commonplace phrases, and promised to remember her in his prayers.

"Oh yes, monseigneur, that is very kind of you," said the comtesse, "but she wants praying for far more than I do. I assure you, I have had masses said for her conversion both at the Dalbade and at the Dominican chapel; twice I have ordered *novenas*, and all to no purpose. And sometimes the thought has crossed my mind that she may possibly contaminate my son with her heresy."

"Comtesse, you should have thought of that before," said Sa Grandeur, sternly.

"Heaven forgive me!" faltered the contrite comtesse. "She seemed so docile, so teachable; I thought her reconciliation would have been a work of days almost, when once she was withdrawn from her mother's guidance. Do you think, monseigneur, after all, that we should not have done better in having a Jesuit?"

"No—a thousand times no!" exclaimed the archbishop. "What a hankering you women have after the holy fathers! You will make me think you a Jesuit presently, comtesse, if you don't take care."

"No, indeed, monseigneur; you wrong me. Only every body knows what zealous propagandists the members of the society are."

"Your curé," said the archbishop, with some heat, "is worth any propagandist among them all. If I had had the pick of all the archbishops in France, I could not have found a man more to my mind. That man, comtesse, but for his ill health, might be called to Paris any day. You do not half appreciate your own good fortune in having him as a spiritual guide."

"My director lives in Toulouse," said Madame de Montaigu. "He is a very pious man, and I have been under his guidance for many years. I have no wish to change."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Sa Grandeur, hastily. "If you are satisfied, that is all that is needful. I don't wish you to change."

For Sa Grandeur remembered that the curé of St. Etienne was a man not likely to forgive him, if he were the means of withdrawing this titled penitent from his guidance to that of a mere country curé—a new comer of whom nobody knew any thing beyond the archbishop's good opinion of him.

"So you say he is in ill health? It is very possible," said madame, "for he looks frightfully emaciated. I thought, do you know, that perhaps he had not enough to eat, and I told him from the first that his knife and fork were always laid at my table; but he has never done us the honor to accept the invitation. I suppose he is too proud. In my opinion, a mere country curé has no right to be proud."

"Of course not," said Sa Grandeur, with an imperceptible smile, thinking to himself as he spoke, "That is why she wants to get rid of D'Eyrieu. He won't dine at the château."

"I do not think, however," he continued, "that the Abbé d'Eyrieu's fault can be pride. Perhaps, on the contrary, it is excess of humility. The austerities he practised formerly were frightful; so much so that his diocesan forbade him, by his vow of obedience, to continue them."

"In-deed!" said madame, pricking up her ears. "You know all about him, then?"

"It is my business," said Sa Grandeur, in a tone which signified, "It is not yours."

When Madame de Montaigu had taken leave, he sat down and wrote a note with his own hand to the Abbé d'Eyrieu, desiring him to present himself at the palace on a certain day after mass.

This letter reached the curé in the evening, about dinner-time. He had just come in from seeing a sick person, and as he hung up his broad-brimmed hat, Pétronille, the coarse-featured loud-voiced peasant woman who waited on him and styled herself housekeeper, brought it in, saying, "The postman asked two sous for bringing it, because it was so far out of his beat."

The curé felt in his pocket for the two sous, laid them on the table, and took up his letter. Having read it, he set to work to brush his cassock and his hat, both plentifully coated with dust from his long walk. During this, Pétronille began to lay the cloth on a small deal table in a corner of the room, called by courtesy the dining-room.

She was not exactly a pleasant object to contemplate as she walked to and fro between the *salle-à-manger* and the kitchen. Her head was enveloped in an old striped black and yellow handkerchief bound low across the forehead, just above the eyebrows, like a nun's coif. She would not on any account have raised it higher, for that would have proclaimed her to be one of the worldly at once throughout the parish, and it was but decent and respectable that M. le Curé's housekeeper should be supposed to be rigidly pious. So, with the thermometer still at 80° in the shade, the kerchief was retained as a badge of propriety. A long tramp to the mill with a bag of maize on her head had somewhat disturbed her head-dress; a wisp of gray hair had escaped from behind, and hung down on her wrinkled neck. Her dress consisted of a coarse garment of half-bleached flax, with long sleeves rolled up to the elbows, and of a short petticoat of a kind of serge, spun from the wool of the black sheep. Her legs and feet were bare, dried up and black-

ened with the dust and sun of forty summers. Her voice was hoarse and cracked, and she strengthened her conversation by many vehement gesticulations, which appeared like menaces to those who did not understand her *patois*. The fact of her having been a landed proprietor at one time of her life—that is to say, owner of a two-roomed cabin and something less than an acre of land—gave her, as she supposed, great influence at the presbytery, and she was in the habit of expressing her opinions pretty freely. She went on with an incessant flow of gossip as she came in and out, the process of laying the cloth not being thereby expedited.

"What do you think, Monsieur le Curé? The miller's daughter, Françoise, is going to be married at last; one may wish her husband joy of her. I wouldn't have a son of mine marry into such a stingy family as hers. Her wedding-clothes are mean beyond every thing, and her father has let her take but six dozen dinner napkins and ten tablecloths from his store. As for the sheets, there are but twenty pair, and the half of them turned sides to middle. I saw that with my own eyes, so I know it is so. If her bridegroom's mother were alive, poor woman!"—here Pétronille rapidly crossed herself—"they would not venture on such niggardliness."

The curé was conjecturing the reason of the archbishop's mandate, and made no answer. But as Pétronille was equally accustomed both to talking and not being answered, she went on again:

"In some respects it will not be a bad wedding. Françoise told me her father was going to kill a sheep, and they will have roast veal and fritters, and there are half a dozen hens fattening in the poultry-yard. I promised to go down and help the day before. I dare say you can manage to do without me, Monsieur le Curé, if I leave you some cold dinner. You see they will be glad to have me; I was a cook in my younger days, before I married, and of course my experience will be of use. They are going to have a cask of wine broached, and a fiddler in the evening. It is a pity she is to be married in the next parish, but I dare say you will be invited to the wedding nevertheless."

As Pétronille spoke the last words, she disappeared into a dark cupboard in the vestibule. There was a hurried exclamation, and an instant after the door was slammed violently to, and she stood before the curé transformed into a Megæra, her eyes burning with anger out of their deep sockets.

"Somebody has stolen the bread!" she screamed, waving her arms in the direction of the cupboard. It must have been done while I was at the mill. And what do you expect, Monsieur le Curé, if you will keep the house-door open for the first tramp to enter and help himself?"

"It was not stolen, my good Pétronille," said the curé, in polished accents, contrasting strangely with Pétronille's rough *patois*; "I gave it away this afternoon."

"Gave it away! Bread that would have lasted for two days with care! Well, Monsieur le Curé, if you like to starve that you may gain a better place in Paradise, I prefer my bread to eat. What am I to do for dinner?"

"Is there no *polenta*?" asked the curé meekly.

"How should there be, when you know we ate it up yesterday?"

"I think I have two sous somewhere." But a search only revealed the emptiness of the curé's pockets. "I remember they went to pay for the letter. What have we for dinner, Pétronille?"

"There is garlic and salad, with two hard-boiled eggs. I was going to make onion soup—for we have plenty of onions and oil—but how can I make onion soup without bread? You are an improvident man, Monsieur le Curé; you are always out at elbows. And yet, with six hundred francs a year, which is nearly one franc sixty-five centimes per day, I think you might manage better."

"I dare say I might. You must beg a bit of bread for yourself to-day, Pétronille, and I will smoke a cigar, if I have one left." But the cigar-box proved as empty as his pockets.

"Just like you, Monsieur le Curé—always improvident," said Pétronille.

The curé put on his hat. "I will e'en go and beg a dinner at the château," he said, and went out.

The Presbytery stood close by the church, a hundred yards beyond the ditch which separated the Montaigu grounds from the public road. Just as the curé had got off the road on to the path leading up to the château through a vineyard, he caught sight of Raymond and his wife coming down the slope towards him. Estelle was hanging on her husband's arm, and every minute they stopped to look about them. They seemed very merry, and they were talking very fast; Raymond put his face under his wife's hat to kiss her, and the hat fell off, and he had to pick it up and dust it. As he put it on he gave her another kiss. Just then Estelle caught sight of the curé, and told her husband to have done.

"I dare say he saw you," she said.

"I hope he did," said Raymond. "It is a husband's duty to kiss his wife sometimes."

"I dare say he was shocked," said Estelle.

The curé, however, had not been shocked. He had thought that it would be a good thing if all the married people in his parish were as fond of each other as these two.

Raymond, as he advanced, lifted his hat with more suavity than he was in the habit of showing to priests. But this priest, with all his shabbiness, was so unmistakably the gentleman, that Raymond would not have ventured to treat him with the haughtiness he generally showed to men who wore the tonsure.

"Monsieur le Curé," said he, "we were coming to see you."

"I am glad," returned the curé, "to have spared madame the dusty walk she would have had from here to the Presbytery."

"We were coming," said Estelle, with a shy blush at the thought that the curé had seen Raymond kissing her, "to ask whether you would dine with us to-day without ceremony. My mother-in-law went away this morning, and the count does not leave his room, so we shall be a very small party."

"Madame," said D'Eyrien, bowing low, "you have forestalled me. I was coming up to beg a dinner."

"You have lost your bet, Raymond," Estelle cried. "You will have to give me a box of gloves."

"I will tell you what that means, Monsieur le Curé," said Raymond in explanation. "My

wife and I had a bet as we were coming along. I told her I was sure you would not accept a dinner invitation from a heretic on a fast-day. And she declared that she had a dinner for you such as a Carême would have been proud of, all composed of dishes such as the Pope himself could not object to; and she said she would make you accept her invitation, heretic as she is."

"I hope I may do justice to madame's dinner," said the curé, who was in truth half famished.

The little dinner-party was a very merry one. Raymond and his wife felt as if a weight of lead was gone when Madame de Montaigu's carriage had rolled out of sight that morning, and their spirits had been rising ever since.

"Thank Heaven," said Raymond, as he embraced his wife, "for one whole month we shall be left to our own devices without daily worry and interference. We shall now be able to have our honeymoon properly, without interruption."

The Abbé d'Eyrieu, whatever austerities he might be said to practise, belonged not to the school of hypocrites, of disfigured face and sad countenance. In the course of a long and arduous pastorate in the poorest parish of Lyons, he had learned, besides the necessity of weeping with those who weep, that no less needful duty of rejoicing with those that do rejoice. As far as a priest may have a wish of his own, D'Eyrieu had wished to die where he had lived and worked, among the poor Lyonnais. His diocesan would have raised him to the dignity of canon, but he besought him to let him remain where he was, alleging that he was not a fit man for dignities: that he should become puffed up and lose his own soul by rising higher in the Church. So the archbishop had given his friendship to D'Eyrieu, and the vacant canonry to another man. After twenty years, monseigneur had made way for a new archbishop, an ardent Ultramontane and friend of the Jesuits. The old archbishop had been a staunch Gallican, and had naturally got priests of his own persuasion around him. The most prominent of these the new archbishop resolved to weed out, and D'Eyrieu was one. So he got his *exeat*, and came to the Archbishop of Toulouse, asking humbly for some small cure in the mountains where no one cared to go, and where he might remain unmolested by Ultramontanists and Jesuits. And monseigneur, who, as we know, hated the whole society, put him here instead of the fat old curé objected to by Madame de Montaigu. He had, *pro forma*, sent to inquire the Lyonnais's antecedents, and had been answered that he was an outrageous Gallican, a man totally wanting in conservatism, and capable of raising up a cabal under the archbishop's very nose. Sa Grandeur burnt this damnatory reply, saying: "Apparently he is an honest man, this poor D'Eyrieu."

Estelle wondered to see the *entente cordiale* that sprang up between her husband and the abbé before dinner was ended. She would have wondered still more, had she imagined that side by side with their youthful unsophisticated merriment a thanksgiving was floating upwards from the heart of the shabby village curé for the domestic happiness which could never visit his own hearth.

While they were taking coffee in the drawing-room, the curé said,

"I believe your family has always been strictly Legitimist, monsieur."

"Yes," Raymond replied, "my family is, and has been. I am not. Legitimism is very pretty in theory, but it won't do for the age. The Bourbons—I say it with all respect—are a worn-out race. The guiding hand for us must be a vigorous one. But," he continued, as D'Eyrieu made a gesture of assent, "we don't say so before my mother, Monsieur l'Abbé, for she would be shocked. She is the most ultra-Legitimist of all the Legitimist party in Languedoc. Her creed may be summed up in three words: monarchy, aristocracy, hierarchy. She shudders at the very sound of progress. Progress, she will tell you gravely, means reform; reform means liberalism; liberalism means socialism, Robespierre, red-republicanism, ruin."

The curé smiled. "I see that I too must keep clear of politics in Madame de Montaignu's presence. I should be sure to get into trouble, for I do not even go with the *parti-prêtre*. But," he added suddenly, "what matters it? A curé has no business with politics; and"—turning to Estelle—"I am sure they can not interest madame. Let us speak of other things."

Estelle blushed. It was not true that she felt no interest in politics; she had begun to feel an interest in them for her husband's sake. But as the curé might have said that by way of changing a subject he did not feel it safe to pursue, she immediately seconded him by putting various questions as to the state of the poor of turbulent Lyons, where he had so long ministered. On such a topic there was no restraint on either side; Estelle felt all her sympathies awakened at the recital of the curé's long experience; Raymond looked with curiosity and wonder at the man who had spent the best part of his life in viewing squalor and hunger, which he was powerless to remove, without having become either disgusted or hardened. "And yet," thought Raymond, "this man speaks and moves like a gentleman. He has been young, full of all instincts of enjoyment, even as I am now. And, strangest of all, he talks as if it were the most natural thing in the world to be, as it were hand-in-glove with that terrible prosaic misery: he does not seem to think there is the least merit in it."

It was late when the curé took his leave. Estelle turned to her husband, saying, "Do you not like him, Raymond? Is he not good?"

"I think him a very curious study," said Raymond, lighting a cigar; "and an honest man, as far as a priest can be. But—who knows?" he continued, with a shrug of the shoulders—"perhaps this very straightforwardness is a mask put on for you and me."

"Oh!" cried his wife. "I am sure he does not wear a mask. I am sure none but a good man could speak and look as he does. I think he is just the sort of man I could go to for advice, supposing I were in trouble."

"Mignonne, I will not have you talk such nonsense," said Raymond, authoritatively. "You in trouble! You, my wife, seek counsel from a priest! *Fi donc!*"

"But married people do have trouble," said his wife, timidly.

"Where there is no love—yes; but for you and me what trouble could there be except separation? And who or what, except death, could

separate us? Only death," he added, shuddering, after a pause, drawing her close to him. "Only death! Ah, mignonne, let us make the most of our one life; let us laugh and love while we may, in despite of the crowned skeleton!"

She did not shudder at his words; neither did she smile at his embrace. She was sorry for him, for she knew that there was another skeleton at the feast besides King Death. Woe to them both on the day when Raymond should first perceive it! But she would school herself, was schooling herself, to love him and forget the other. She lightly laid her hand on his, vowing to herself that he should never, never know.

"And," said her husband, fondly stroking her hand, after a long silence, "supposing—it is absurd to suppose such a thing, for I shall never cease to love you as long as I live—still, supposing any thing were to happen either to you or myself, requiring counsel or advice—remember this, mignonne: *Marriage is confession*—ought to be, if it is not. I know not which fills me with the greater horror, to imagine a secret dividing us two, or to imagine a third person the keeper of it."

"I wish you would not speak so," said his wife. Now it was her turn to shudder. Now she saw the other skeleton too plainly.

"You repudiate the idea of secrets?" he cried, pressing his lips to hers. "An absurd idea, is it not, mignonne?"

"Yes," returned Estelle, faintly.

* * * * *

There was a thunderstorm that night, so that the curé's walk to Toulouse the next day was a muddy instead of a dusty one. He stopped to get his shoes polished by the little shoeblack in the Place du Capitole, and then went to the cathedral, where he knelt down for a few moments.

He had cudgelled his brains the best part of the night to know what Sa Grandeur could possibly want of him; but had been able to find himself guilty of no offense, either in his ministry or his life, save such as from his weakness and imperfection he had been falling into all his life long. "If even the greatest saints," he cogitated, "sin seven times a day, what can be our daily offenses? Nevertheless, I feel as if the Lord were on my side, and I will fear not what man can do. *Maria beata, ora pro me.*" "I come by appointment," said he to the archiepiscopal beadle at the entrance of the quadrangle.

"Are you the curé of Suzon?" the beadle asked.

"I am."

"This way, Monsieur le Curé. Sa Grandeur will receive you in his private room."

"Take an arm-chair, brother," said the archbishop, in his most winning manner. "I have sent for you to deliver an admonition. The chair opposite me is the most comfortable in the room. Sit down and take it quietly."

D'Eyrieu sat down, thinking how very different this man was from his dear old friend and diocesan at Lyons.

"My dear brother," the archbishop continued, "you know you are not a lady's man."

"Certainly not, monseigneur. I have always distrusted the company of devout ladies—drawing-room nuns, as one may say. God forgive me if I wrong them; but their conversation has

always seemed to me more curious than profitable."

"You are perfectly right in theory, brother. I entirely agree with you. But theories must be modified now and then in this world. You have offended the Comtesse de Montaigu. Now I put it to you, was that necessary? Was it wise?"

"I am innocent of all intentional offense," said the curé. "I have seen scarcely any thing of Madame de Montaigu."

"That is just it. She complains you won't go there. She gave you an invitation to dinner, and you have never availed yourself of it."

"I plead guilty to that," said the curé.

"Well now, dear brother, I put it to you, was it wise to do so? You know the thing this poor dear comtesse has so much at heart—the conversion of her daughter-in-law. She is quite in low spirits about it, I do assure you. And she thinks you might have done more to further her great wish; indeed she does, my dear curé."

"In all submission, monseigneur, I would ask, whether it was at all likely a priest would find the way to a young heart in a house given up to the utmost frivolities of fashion? What would you have said yourself, monseigneur, had you seen my cassock in the midst of a crowd of idle men and women, bedizened, wigged, and painted, spouting and posturing, and making fools of themselves in every possible manner? Would you not have told me that I was out of my place, and that my time for seeking to convey spiritual instruction was when the château was deserted by the brilliant frivolous crowd? Frankly, monseigneur, the Comtesse de Montaigu has been herself, and will be, I fear, the chief marplot, the chief obstacle in the reconciliation of her gentle daughter-in-law."

"Peste!" said Sa Grandeur, shrugging his shoulders. "The kind of woman who thinks she can show the way to every body."

"Precisely so, monseigneur. Without her I should be hopeful. With her, this reconciliation may be the work of years. And there is the husband too."

"Heavens! Not turned Huguenot, has he?"

"I was going to say I wish he had; for that would show that he had a faith of some sort. I very much fear he is an atheist, monseigneur. That is my impression, I will say. I am bound to admit that it is only an impression, and that I gathered it less from what he said than from what he did not say."

"Dear, dear, what a pity!" said Sa Grandeur, elevating his eyebrows. "But you see, *that* does not give this poor comtesse any uneasiness: she has her husband as an example of the salutary change a severe illness may produce in a man. The comte, my dear curé, was formerly an out-and-out Voltairean; and now his life is quite edifying. So, I pray you, be not so chary of seeking the society of the good people of the chateau."

"I shall obey, monseigneur." Presently he added: "You will like to know that I dined with the son and his wife yesterday. They were good enough to come themselves and invite me. I passed a very agreeable evening. It has rarely been my good fortune to see such exuberant happiness; and I wish, for the good of the community, that more of these love-matches took place. They are a sight as rare as blessed."

"Very true, my dear abbé. The only draw-

back in this case is the religion. And really, as I told the comtesse, she should have thought of that before. Enough! I am sure you will do all you can to bring things to a happy ending. You will dine with me to-day, and return to Suzon in the cool of the evening. You will only meet my vicar-general and my private secretary, and we shall talk of literature, of the vintage, and so on—you understand."

And then Sa Grandeur launched forth against the great objects of his aversion, the Jesuits, who were making his life a burden to him just then, from their overweening influence at the Papal court.

"Every thing I say or do is taken hold of and misrepresented at Rome," he complained. "I am sure there are Jesuit spies round me." The curé suggested his changing his household. "*Cui bono?*" said Sa Grandeur. "I might get worse in than what I turned out. Have you seen that church of theirs? Four painted windows in already—all of them gifts—and more to follow."

(Monseigneur had two Jesuits in his household. But how he came to find them out, and what he did afterwards, does not enter into the scope of the present narration. It is enough to say that one of the traitors was his private secretary, and the other the beadle.)

The October twilights are of short duration in Languedoc. Night set in long before D'Eyrien had reached that part of his road which ran through the Montaigu grounds. The storm of the preceding night had refreshed the thirsty earth, and the summer of St. Martin—that pale, still wrath of the fierce, dead summer—had begun its ephemeral reign. Behind him lay the plain in one broad grand sweep, ending in a low serrated white line. Down in the south-west quarter hung a heavy bank of cloud, promising soft rain and mist for the morrow. Before him the Montaigu woods stood out against the violet cloud-flecked sky. A warm south wind stirred the dry maize-stalks and made the leaves flicker and rustle throughout the vineyards, as if a spirit had passed over them. From its couch of moss by the ditch-side a solitary bullfrog piped its monotonous call. Its fellows in the distance answered in sweet thirds and fifths, and the wind gathered up the sounds into a chord of music and swept it to the silent north, along with the desolate cry of the night-bird on the marsh and the faint flash of the waters over the weir. The glowworms hid their lamps as the priest's gown brushed past the bushes, the gray moth flew out with a dull whirr, and the bat skimmed away in alarm. One faint ray of light from the silent château cast a glimmer across his path.

D'Eyrien looked up. It came from the upper story, the abode of the young husband and wife. He knelt, and spread his hands in supplication for them; both so young, both so happy, and, alas! both astray. His heart melted within him, as he reflected that happiness was not likely to bring them to the fold from which they had wandered; and he shrank as the prayer passed his lips that they might be led back to Holy Church through the gates of sorrow, rather than live and die in heresy. Yet he forced himself to pray that it might be so. And then, with a blessing, he rose and passed into the shade of the melancholy beech-woods.

The solitary light came from Estelle's cham-

ber: she was sitting rocking herself to and fro, weeping quietly lest her husband should hear. And as she wept, she prayed that she might come to love Raymond heart and soul, even as he loved her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOTHERS-IN-LAW.

NEVER, perhaps, was a young wife's part so hard to play as was Estelle's, during her first year of married life. Any mother-in-law but Madame de Montaigu would have been conquered by her never-failing sweetness of disposition. But madame had taken a solemn vow not to love her daughter-in-law as long as she remained a heretic. Sometimes she forgot her vow, for a few days, and then she was happy; but as soon as she remembered it, she felt it her duty as a Catholic to be especially disagreeable in order to atone for past amenities; and all concessions on her daughter-in-law's side were forgotten or made light of—the one great result not being obtained, namely, reconciliation to the Church.

For instance, Estelle accompanied the comtesse willingly enough to the Advent and Lenten stations, when the pulpit was held by famous Catholic orators: she went with her, attired in deep mourning, on the day when the Legitimist noblesse assembled in the cathedral to commemorate the death of Louis XVI. If she did not, as the noblesse present did, renew a silent oath of fealty to the exile of Frohsdorf while kneeling in front of the catafalque blazing with tapers, which stood in the midst of the darkened nave, she at least was impressed more strongly than most of those present by the funeral shadow caused by the heavy black serge curtain drawn across the choir, by the incense, the dark-robed crowd, and above all by the wail of the organ and the voices of the invisible choristers as they poured forth the solemn "*Requiem eternam dona eis*," to the pathetic music of Mozart's Fifteenth Mass.

Madame de Montaigu was pleased to see her daughter-in-law weep on such occasions. She wept herself for company, and believed that the wish of her heart was about to be answered. Over and over again was she disappointed by seeing that Estelle, in spite of her facility at receiving strong impressions, never intimated a wish to be instructed in the Catholic religion. She would attend a Lenten sermon or a mass for the dead, and come home and say no more about it, in spite of her emotions having been excited during the time: she would even go to hear a Protestant sermon the very day after. Madame had tried to instil some of the Catholic tenets into her mind by making her read books of devotion to her; but Raymond had forbidden this, and had told her that if she required to be read to, she must engage a companion. This had so offended Madame de Montaigu that Estelle had at length, as the only means of pacifying her, presented a fine set of Easter vestments to the little church of Suzon.

Often did the young wife long for a home less grand and more home-like, where there would be only a husband to please, instead of a mother-in-law whom there was no possibility of pleasing, and who was never so much in her element as when lording it over Raymond and herself.

Raymond would say, after one of the frequent undignified disputes with his mother, "Estelle, your mother would never quarrel like that, would she?" And Estelle could answer truly, that it would be impossible for Mrs. Russell to do so. Raymond would perhaps speculate how much pleasanter it would have been if they had taken up their abode at the Hôtel St. Jean, instead of at Château Montaigu; but Estelle never followed him in any such speculations. She could not tell Raymond that her old home was hateful to her from its associations. She could only say that she knew her mother to be strongly opposed to the foreign custom of parents and married sons and daughters living under one roof. When Mrs. Russell was expected to pay a visit to the château, it was Raymond who looked forward with gladness to seeing her, not Estelle. Estelle looked forward to her coming with dismay. Alfred was coming too, and Alfred would be sure to offend Madame de Montaigu before long; and then Mrs. Russell would be offended, and there would be a quarrel—or rather, Mrs. Russell would show her displeasure by preserving an icy silence, and Madame de Montaigu would show hers by saying all sorts of violent and totally irrelevant things, and then turn her wrath upon Raymond for not taking her part.

Besides this, she had a latent, unexpressed dislike to the idea of seeing her mother. Writing had been comparatively easy work, for Mrs. Russell fortunately asked no questions which Estelle would have found difficult to answer. But to find herself face to face with her mother, and feel that she had wronged her so cruelly—and not her alone, but Raymond also—was horrible even in anticipation. She knew that every kind look and word she gave Raymond was a cheat put upon him, the semblance of a love she was always trying to feel, but could not feel for all her trying. Even in the midst of his greatest kindness, the thought of how she was cheating him would so overwhelm her that she could not keep herself from the vain longing that some chance might separate them, and relieve her from listening to a love she could not return. Feeling all this, it was not possible for her to wish to see her mother's face again.

Mrs. Russell had not been long at the château before she discovered that some unseen barrier lay between herself and her daughter. She had expected to find Estelle changed, it was true. She had looked forward to seeing a certain dignity in her manner, as befitted her new position. The dignity was there, but apart from the dignity there was a frigidity, which, though manifested in a negative rather than a positive manner, annoyed and disappointed Mrs. Russell. She had expected to be her daughter's confidante, and Estelle had no secrets to tell her. She had advice ready to be asked for, and Estelle asked for none. She seemed to make it a point equally with her husband, that her mother was to be entertained as an honored guest. Mrs. Russell could not complain of being neglected. What she complained of was, that she was made too much of; that she was too much the guest, and not enough the mother.

She felt that she was being treated badly. Had she not a claim on her daughter's gratitude? Had she not secured for her an excellent position? Had she not thwarted her childish wishes from

pure kindness to her and pure desire for her welfare? She had done her best; and if unlucky chance had prevented her knowing of the sudden change of fortune which had fallen to that awkward young barrister—what then? Knowing only what she did, would she have been justified in allowing Estelle to throw herself away?

Was it possible, Mrs. Russell thought, seeing that Estelle so studiously avoided speaking of herself, that this extreme reticence arose from her not having yet got over her silly fancy? Or had she heard of Mr. Vivian's accession to the baronetcy? To both these questions, however, she felt, after due observation, that a negative answer might be returned. Estelle's manner to her husband was perfect, Mrs. Russell was forced to admit. And by dint of various roundabout inquiries she was convinced of her daughter's ignorance of Mr. Vivian having succeeded his uncle. It appeared that the sight of an English paper of any sort was unknown at the château. English correspondence Estelle had none. Mrs. Russell asked in some trepidation whether Julia had ever written, and was much relieved to hear that she had not even sent to tell Estelle of her having arrived safely home.

"That was rather a want of politeness," Mrs. Russell said; "but, after all, it was just like Julia."

"I am glad she has never written," Estelle said. "My husband disapproves of her very strongly."

How much more strongly would he disapprove, thought Mrs. Russell, if he did but know what she knew! She could not but congratulate herself on her good luck in having disposed of her maid Mathurine. With Mathurine she felt she never would have dared return to Toulouse. She had found a place for her with a rich Jewish baroness, where her perquisites would be such as to console her at quitting her English mistress. But Mrs. Russell did not feel it pleasant to talk of either Julia Maurice or Mathurine. To change the conversation she inquired for Mademoiselle Mathilde.

"She is really going to be married," said Estelle. "Madame Fleury has been taking her about everywhere to announce the coming event. M. Beaucens is a *sous-préfet* now; and Raymond told Mathilde that as he would be certain to rise, it was proper that she should know Latin and Greek, because when her husband got a *préfecture* she might have all sorts of learned people to entertain. And poor Mathilde blushed up to the roots of her hair, and looked distressfully at her aunt. Raymond was impertinent enough to say that you had me taught Latin and Greek for fear a *préfet* should want to marry me. Madame Fleury was so impressed that she actually shed tears, and cried, 'Alas! no, I have not been such a virtuous mother as Madame Roussel; I have not made to learn the Latin and the Greek to my beloved niece.' The best of the joke is, that a note came down from Madame Fleury next day, asking my old master's address. And there is Mathilde having a lesson every day."

Raymond, coming in while they were laughing over this absurdity, congratulated himself on having had the tact to leave them so long together; all the while that Mrs. Russell was thinking to herself that she should never wish to be *tête-à-tête* with her daughter again; and that

now there was not a creature left who cared very much for her except Alfred.

She began before long to take offense because of Raymond's behavior to this boy, and to take her daughter to task about it. This was soon after they had left Toulouse for the château.

Master Alfred, not finding room enough in the grounds for his exploits, had turned topsyturvy for a whole morning over the young asparagus in the kitchen garden. And Raymond, having caught him in the act, had boxed his ears by way of compensation to the outraged feelings of the upper gardener.

"If I had known that my dear boy was to be treated in this way, Estelle, I would never have come to stay under your husband's roof," said the mother, in great heat, as she bathed her son's ear with eau-de-cologne.

"Alfred was very provoking, and the gardener had spoken to him several times; and if I had seen him I should have been strongly tempted to do as my husband did," said Estelle.

"No son-in-law shall box my boy's ears!" exclaimed Mrs. Russell, kissing the right ear, which was the reddest.

"Then perhaps, mamma," said Estelle, nettled, "you will be good enough to keep Alfred in something like order. You seem to forget altogether that the house and garden, and everything in it, is my father-in-law's property, and that it will not be at all agreeable to my husband to be taken to task about the damage done by his brother-in-law. And I must tell you it is not Alfred's first offense; the gardeners have complained repeatedly to my husband about it. And I hope he will box Alfred's ears again, if he catches him trampling down the beds."

"You have no feeling," cried Mrs. Russell, "not one spark. Look at the dear child's ears! What a color!"

"They would be white enough by this time if you had not been rubbing them with eau-de-cologne," said Estelle, sarcastically. And then Mrs. Russell was very much hurt, and showed it by keeping an uncomfortable silence; sending her daughter to Coventry, in short, as far as it was practicable for a guest to behave so to a hostess. But at last—

There came a fine spring morning when Madame de Montaigu fluttered up and down with more than her usual importance, gave and countermanded orders by the dozen, changed the position of every knick-knack in her daughter-in-law's drawing-room, snubbed her old husband tenfold more than on ordinary days, and, in short, made a great commotion, and enjoyed herself uncommonly.

Raymond had walked unceasingly up and down the house, until told sharply by madame that her nerves would not stand it; when he subsided meekly into an arm-chair and read the *Débats* upside down. Even old M. de Montaigu had roused himself from his usual apathetic state, and, aided by his son's arm, had walked up stairs to the room where his tiny grandson lay in a splendid cradle.

The old gentleman sat down in front of it, and gravely put on his gold-rimmed spectacles, while Raymond stood by, looking with an air of great satisfaction at the new-comer.

M. de Montaigu peered into the cradle for one moment, and then, taking off his spectacles,

wiped them carefully, and replaced them in their case.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Raymond inquired, with great eagerness.

"Very ugly," mumbled his father, oracularly.

"Ugly!"

"Remarkably so," pursued the old gentleman, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Thanks, monsieur," said Raymond, considerably nettled, "I am sorry you took the trouble to come up stairs to see him." He did not mind much on his own account, but he could not brook the idea of any thing belonging to Estelle being stigmatized as ugly.

"Yes," said M. de Montaignu, rising slowly; "it was not worth while to come up, certainly. Never mind. Your new acquisition is a fine copper-color just now, but I dare say he will turn a more Christian hue in time. You will give him the names of our gracious king, remember; and your mother must write, in my name, and beg his majesty to stand sponsor. I would go to Frohsdorf myself to beg the honor, but I am too feeble. Give me your arm, my son, for I am growing old, very old, alas! and the sooner I am out of the way the better. Take me back to my room, and let me make my salvation in peace. Will that child cry aloud, hey? If so, he must be put somewhere where I do not hear him. Noise distracts me; your mother distracts me. Let me be left to make my salvation in peace; do you hear, Raymond?"

Raymond was far too much disgusted to make any reply. He saw his father once more enshrouded in his arm-chair, and then took himself off in high dudgeon, muttering things uncomplimentary to M. de Montaignu.

The two grandmamas had already come to the verge of a quarrel several times, although the day was not yet half over; each possessing her own peculiar theory on that momentous subject, the rearing of infants, and adhering thereto in spite of arguments and blandishments from the adverse side.

The nurses, too, had each her own particular and infallible system to carry out; so that between them all, this infant scion of the noble house of Montaignu-Breuilh might have found the beginning of his life very hard to put up with, had not his papa silenced all objectors by decreeing that *le bébé* was to be managed as Madame Raymond chose, and in no other way whatever.

Madame de Montaignu was for sending the child right off to the mountains to be nursed. She knew a respectable farmer's wife—

"Heavens!" Raymond ejaculated. Send the child away! Have it changed for the nurse's brat, perhaps! What could his mother be thinking of? What would his wife say to such a piece of barbarity?

What should she say indeed? asked madame, bridling up. Of course she ought by this time to know what she owed to herself, as well as to the child; and if not, she—Octavie de Montaignu, *née* Breuilh—did, and could inform her. It was her bounden duty, as the wife of the future Comte de Montaignu, to cultivate society. She owed it, not only to Raymond, but to her—Madame de Montaignu. If the *bébé* were kept at home, she would get so stupidly fond of it that she would end by going nowhere. And to immure herself for the sake of a mere infant, who

didn't know its own mother from its nurse, was too preposterous to dream of. And madame flounced off to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Russell sat in great state and dignity, not quite recovered from her recent defeat in the cap-and-no-cap skirmish.

Madame, with the consciousness of a late victory, appealed to her as a mother. Mrs. Russell replied coldly that she was not the child's mother, fortunately, and would have no more to say.

"But," insisted madame, "it is really not proper."

"A truce to the proprieties," cried Raymond, angrily. He had come to Mrs. Russell, hoping to win her over to his side. But madame turned, and opened her whole verbal battery upon him with such effect that he fled discomfited to the conservatory, where his mother-in-law found him half an hour later in one of his angriest moods, switching off the heads of the plants as he walked.

"My mother is a monster of cruelty," he began.

"My dear Raymond"—Mrs. Russell interrupted.

"Stop, mother-in-law," he cried; "let me have my say once for all. I and my wife want our children to grow up loving us. Now just hear how I was brought up. In the first place, I never saw either father or mother till I was five years old. There was an elder son, and it was not till his death that they bethought themselves that they had another child. When I made my appearance, they were so disgusted to find that I resembled exactly the peasant children amongst whom I had been brought up, that they packed me off as soon as ever my college uniform could be got ready. My mother took years to overcome her dislike to me. Her fine feelings were so ruffled, forsooth, at my bad manners and my *patois*, and above all at the unnatural persistency with which I regretted the peasant woman who had been a mother to my infancy. A mother is a mother, every body knows; but I do wish my son to love his mother a little better than I loved mine when I was a boy."

Here Madame de Montaignu rustled in and inquired, with an injured air, whether Raymond had thought of sending for the curé to have the child baptized.

No, Raymond said, he had not. It did not matter; it could be deferred.

"Deferred!" madame cried. His child nearly a day old, and not made a Christian yet! Supposing it died before the priest came. Horrible thought! She should send for him instantly. It was very strange that Raymond should interfere in matters which he did not understand, while he neglected that which it was his most sacred duty to look after. She walked off in great anger, and Raymond, invoking patience, followed her.

"My dear mother," he said, taking her arm, "I have promised my wife that she shall bring up her child in her own religion, and it is to be baptized by the Protestant pastor."

"How could you be such a fool!" exclaimed madame.

"Fool or not, the promise is passed; and I abide by it."

"But you know," she insinuated, "a promise made to a heretic is not binding."

"Madame! would you have me break faith with my own wife?" said he with a voice of utter scorn.

"But she is a heretic," persisted the comtesse.

"If there is to be peace between us," retorted Raymond, "you will never call her by that name again."

"Have you forgotten the terms of the marriage contract?" madame asked angrily.

"What of it," said he; "if she and I agree to set it aside? I believe that a mother has the first claim over her child's body and soul; and as long as she teaches him to love and obey her—"

"Listen, Raymond," said the comtesse. "I would rather see your child dead than entertain such a horrible proposal. There has never been a heretic Montaigne yet, and there never shall be, while I live to prevent it."

"Depend upon it, mother, if he wishes very much to be a Catholic when he grows up, I shall be the last man to prevent him."

"So," cried madame, with unfeigned horror, "you would leave it to your son's option to be saved or damned! Very considerate of you, indeed! No, my son; for you, indeed, I fear there is but little hope, but I will do what I can to save my first grandchild from perdition. Heavens! that a son of mine should say such things to my face! What have I done to deserve such an affliction? I do not blame Estelle. If she, poor thing, wishes her child to be baptized by a heretic, 'tis because she knows no better. But to see you, who have received a Christian education, thus calmly propose to barter your child's salvation, is so horrible that it makes me shudder. Alas! I know too well the origin of this laxity; it arises from the soul-destroying doctrines you imbibe from those wicked Socialist books you and your wife are so fond of reading."

"I am responsible to nobody for the books I read," said Raymond, whose patience was quite worn out.

"More's the pity," continued madame; "especially when the books are written by such men as Comte and Proudhon. My director says—"

"Confound your director!" cried Raymond.

"Will you please to understand, madame, once for all, that I decline interference in my affairs of any kind whatever."

"I do it for the sake of your soul's salvation."

"I tell you, I won't be interfered with; I'll read what books I please: and hear me, madame, if I and my wife choose, every one of our children shall be baptized by the pastor."

"There is no salvation out of the pale of the Church!" shrieked madame, with uplifted hands.

"And if you don't keep quiet, I'll become a Protestant too."

"Oh no, no, no!" cried she, bursting into tears. "My Raymond, my only son, turn heretic and kill me with grief and shame! Any thing rather than see you forsake the Catholic Church."

Her distress was so genuine that her son was mollified. "Poor woman," he thought, "I suppose she is fond of me after a fashion, although she does manage to worry me out of my senses. Well, mother," he said aloud, "I won't do any thing without due consideration. But you will please to understand that I meant what I said just now about non-interference in my family concerns. As to my wife, I am much mistak-

en, mother, if she does not enter the kingdom of heaven—wherever that is—before you and me."

"Ah!" sighed the comtesse, "if she were but Catholic! If that D'Eyrieu had been a man of talent, he would have converted her in a month. Raymond, I shall send for my director—"

"I beg you will do nothing of the kind," said he; "for neither my wife nor I wish to have any thing to do with him. Now, mother, I am going to be quite open and aboveboard. I am just about to write a note to Pastor Cazères to come and baptize the child. You can be present or not, as you please."

"Thank you, no," said his mother, turning up her nose. "Do you think I would remain in the same room for an instant with that man, so fat and so pompous?"

"A fault," Raymond returned, "which he possesses in common with the archbishop, our dear cousin, nearly all the canons of the cathedral, and nineteen out of twenty village curés."

There was unfortunately no denying this, so madame shrugged her shoulders and walked away, declaring she washed her hands of Raymond and his wife, and all belonging to them. After such a declaration, it was with extreme surprise that Raymond, as he followed Mrs. Russell into the drawing-room on hearing of the pastor's arrival, perceived his mother there before him.

"Pray, how long may it take you to baptize a child?" Madame de Montaigne was saying, as she looked M. Cazères over from head to foot.

M. Cazères, perfectly undisturbed by the haughtiness of the Catholic comtesse, replied that it was simply an affair of ten minutes.

"Ten minutes! Pray, can you get it properly done in that time?"

"Oh, dear, yes; what was wanted save a good hearty prayer?" M. Cazères asked, with a look of extreme confidence in his abilities in that line.

Mrs. Russell heard and saw this skirmishing, and felt equally angry with madame and with the pastor. Madame, of course, meant to show her contempt for Huguenots. But why could not that vulgar puffy man have put on gown and bands, so as to have looked at least pseudo-clerical, instead of standing there in a dusty coat, looking as much as possible like a grocer? Raymond felt no anger with the pastor; he took him as he found him. But he was angry with his mother for her bad taste; nor was he better pleased when, as the child's name was asked, she took the words out of his mouth, and named him herself. The deed, however, was done, and could not be cancelled; and consequently, instead of the three names Raymond intended giving, *bébé* was carried back to his mamma with a string of appellations belonging to him, about fifteen in number, beginning with Louis-Désiré-Henri, and ending with Marie-Joseph-Jean-Baptiste, just for all the world as if he had been a prince of the Bourbon line.

Estelle was so happy, so grateful to her husband for having carried out her wish to have the child baptized in her own faith, that Raymond felt strengthened to re-enter the lists with his mother, if necessary.

"How beautiful he is!" whispered the young mother, with a sigh of intense happiness. "And

what did you call him? A family name, of course."

"He has got enough names to make his head ache," said Raymond. "A conglomeration of all the ancestral names my mother could think of on the spur of the moment, of which, perhaps, the most sensible is Louis-Désiré."

"Désiré! There could not be a better name than that." If the very trees had called out the name of Louis, she would not have cared, now. "Désiré! Ah! Raymond dear, you are glad, doubtless; but you never, never, can be so glad as I am."

"And to think," said Raymond after a pause, most injudiciously, it must be confessed—"to think of my mother actually wanting to send him away to the mountains to be nursed!"

"To the mountains! Send *my* baby away! How dare she interfere? How can she be so cruel?" cried Estelle, clasping her child tight. "Raymond, promise me I shall always keep my baby?"

Raymond promised willing enough; but his injudicious speech did more harm than he had thought possible. He had not imagined, he said humbly, when taken to task by the authorities, that the maternal instinct could be so strongly developed in so short a period. Which apology was received with something very nearly approaching a sneer by his English mother-in-law.

"Your wife," said Mrs. Russell, with great emphasis, "will be like me in that respect, if in no other. I was devoted to my children from their birth." And although Mrs. Russell praised herself, she spoke with perfect truth.

Raymond sighed to think of his own neglected infancy. "Thank Heaven," he muttered, "my son will be brought up differently. I am glad I married an Englishwoman."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MADAME WILL HAVE HER OWN WAY.

To return to Madame de Montaignu. After witnessing the baptism of her infant grandson by the Protestant pastor with ill-concealed anger and disgust, she returned to her own apartments down-stairs, and frightened her old husband by an outburst all the more violent from the restraint she had put upon herself just before.

"Well, well, matters will be arranged somehow, I dare say," said M. le Comte, not having much idea how matters could be arranged, since the deed was done, but wishing to soothe his angry wife. It was foolish of Raymond to thwart her so, he thought. If he would have the brat christened by a Huguenot pastor, why not have it done on the sly?

"Yes, I will arrange matters," exclaimed madame, as she retired to her boudoir, where she sat plunged in thought for nearly an hour, while a steadfast scowl contracted her forehead. At last she rose, and moving quietly to a clothes-press, took out a long black hood, of exactly the same shape and texture as that worn by the peasant-women and most of the shopkeeping class, when going to mass or to confession. Drawing it round her so as to conceal her figure entirely, she turned to leave the room, taking a glance at her mirror as she passed. The view seemed not alto-

gether satisfactory, for she made an impatient exclamation, and put up one hand to smooth away the wrinkles from her forehead. She stopped a moment before the glass, trying to give her features a less harassed expression.

"That woman will make me grow old before my time," she cried. "There is only one consolation in the midst of it all, and that is, that if she dies now her money won't go back to her family. That son of mine is an infatuated fool. I do believe he is as much in love with her as when first they were married." And with a deep sigh, madame gave her forehead another smoothing, and slipped off the diamond ring she wore on her middle finger. Then, drawing the hood round her face so as to escape recognition, she opened the door, and glided stealthily through the servants' corridor to a little side-door opening on the garden. Once there, she walked on briskly through the thickets of roses and Persian lilac till she got to the path leading down through the vineyard to the village Presbytery. Under the shadow of the black hood she went boldly past the men who were at work mending the road, and entered the Presbytery, whose front door stood wide open, according to the Abbé d'Eyrieu's invariable custom. Seeing that the priest's three-cornered beaver hung on its nail, she went to the door of the dining-room and listened, intending to return to the château without speaking if he had any one with him. She heard in a moment that the abbé was reading his breviary half-aloud; so she knocked—no timid, gentle knock as of a penitent, but with a sort of authority. The abbé, however, still went on reading: upon which madame made a gesture of impatience and knocked again. This time the priest's voice cried:

"Come in, my child!"—supposing it to be one of the village children come to see him. They were his only visitors on a week-day. The voice, cheery, genial, and sympathetic, smoothed the wrinkles from the comtesse's brow as if by magic, in spite of d'Eyrieu's being out of her good graces on account of his ill-success in that matter of Estelle's conversion. She entered, and closed the door carefully after her.

Some time after, Pétronille came in with a pitcher of water on her head, and catching the sound of voices in the dining-room, immediately put her pitcher down and applied her ear to the keyhole. That was not much good, for the conversation was being carried on in a provokingly low tone. At length she managed to catch a few words in French, not *patois*, which, however, only satisfied her that the conference was coming to an end. "At eleven, or a quarter-past. It is well." And almost before she had time to start back and stand in the kitchen doorway, the door opened, and a woman, muffled in a long black hood, passed out, without so much as a look or a word for Pétronille, and took the lower road to the chateau farm.

The abbé followed the stranger out, and then went into the kitchen, where he kept Pétronille talking so long, that by the time she was free to look out on the road it was deserted.

Long did the old priest walk up and down his room after the departure of the comtesse.

Her errand may have been guessed already. It was to apprise d'Eyrieu of her firm resolve to have her grandson baptized into the Catholic Church on the very first opportunity. At any

hour of the day or night he was to hold himself ready to obey her summons. What had he to do but to obey? As a priest, his duty lay clear before him. And yet—he groaned as he thought of the friendly feeling which had sprung up between himself and the young married pair; and which would be replaced by angry estrangement when they learnt—as they would before long, for Madame de Montaigu would never be able to keep silence—that he had been the instrument in frustrating their express wishes regarding their first-born. They would never forgive him; and Raymond, poor, misguided soul, would hate the Catholic religion with a yet deeper hatred.

Mechanically putting his breviary under his arm, d'Eyrieu walked out through his garden on to the copse skirting the Montaigu vineyards. Two men were struggling hard with him. One, the priest, bound hand and foot in the Church's thrall; the other, the gentleman of a hundred ancestors: for d'Eyrieu had ancestry, though he was poor and of small account among men; and the gentleman within him was whispering persistently the word "underhand," and applying it to the act he was contemplating.

Yes. But, on the other hand, was not baptism a necessity? Because the father was so smitten with blindness, should he hesitate therefore as to the right or wrong of bringing the child within the pale of salvation? If the father were indeed so blind, surely his duty was but the plainer.

Thinking thus, he came upon Raymond himself, smoking his cigar. Instantly his cigar-case was opened, and offered to the priest, who was not smoking. D'Eyrieu refused. He was going to do what would put an end to his friendship with this man; how could he accept a gift from him? A gift, too, so eminently social, so partaking of the nature of the bread and salt covenant. But he refused it with such a dejected air, that Raymond looked at him.

"Refuse a cigar!" Something indeed must have befallen the abbé. Could he know?

D'Eyrieu waved his hand and replied not. Presently he said, "I ought to congratulate you, Monsieur Raymond, on your accession to paternal dignities."

"Yes," Raymond answered simply; "as if I were not happy enough before, I have this over and above. I am a lucky fellow, dear abbé."

"And yet this child's birth may bring—nay, will bring—more strife than peace to many of us."

"*Peste!*" thought Raymond; the priest was then cognizant of all the quarrelling which had been going on that day up at the château. Well, well! What else, after all, should he expect? He replied aloud: "With people's quarrelling I have no concern. Let them quarrel till they are hoarse; I and my wife are of one mind, and will be, I trust, always."

D'Eyrieu walked on; then turned suddenly, saying: "Monsieur Raymond, I would to God you were not of one mind in one thing at least. I wish that you would tell me if it were your intention to have your son baptized into the Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Raymond pressed his lips together; he was beginning to get angry. His mother, he thought, had been setting the priest on him. He endeavored to speak calmly:

"Such is not my intention." Then he added:

"My wife's wish was that the child should be baptized in her religion, and I saw no reason for not gratifying that wish. My theory is, that for the first six or seven years the whole direction of the child should be given up to the mother. For my own part, I would rather not have had the child baptized at all."

"Good God!" was the priest's exclamation, as he involuntarily crossed himself. After a pause he said:

"This has deeply grieved your mother."

"My mother," returned Raymond, "is always deeply grieved when she can't have her own way."

This was so true that there was no replying to it.

"I will accompany you one turn more," said Raymond, "and then I must bend my steps homeward."

They had nearly reached the entrance to the vineyard, when d'Eyrieu stopped and said:

"Monsieur Raymond, let me thank you and your wife for the many little kindnesses which have smoothed my lot since I came to this parish. This may be my last opportunity of speaking—"

"You are not going away?" interrupted Raymond.

"No. But you will not wish our intercourse to continue, when I inform you that, seeing by your own admission that your son as yet only enjoys the privilege of baptism as conveyed through a heretic, and that you yourself would even deny him such a pseudo-baptism—I, as a priest of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, am bound to confer on him that birthright of which you would thus cruelly deprive him. As I shall thus be going diametrically against your will, I expect that you will henceforth treat me as a stranger, or, worse than that, as an enemy. Yet, if you can and will, I would entreat you to remember me kindly, to consider that I am as a soldier under orders, and that my orders are very plain."

Raymond looked at him for a moment in silence.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, taking off his hat, "if I don't respect the Catholic religion I respect you. You are an honest man, sir, and I beg you will honor me with your friendship as hitherto."

The abbé was surprised. He had expected anything but this; he had braced himself up to endure scorn, and here was the right hand of fellowship offered instead.

"Ah!" he sighed, "if you would but believe!"

"No more of that," said Raymond. "Don't cajole me into argument. You know it is no good; I was born a freethinker, and what is bred in the bone must come out in the flesh. Besides, you would not be quiet and hear *my* side of the question, for fear I should convert you."

"God forbid!" was the priest's answer. . . .

And so they parted, each secretly admiring and pitying the other. . . .

Madame de Montaigu was so radiant that evening, so cordial to Mrs. Russell, so complaisant to monsieur, and so caressing in her manner to her son, that Raymond, even without his conversation with d'Eyrieu in the wood, would have felt sure she was plotting something or other. But what the plot was became quite plain, when, while smoking at his window, he perceived a faint glimmering in the little window above the altar of the old chapel. "Oh ho, my lady mother," he thought,

as he blew the long whiffs into the night-air, "are you going to bring my son and heir into the Catholic Church by the back stairs?"

He went and barred the entrance at the head of the stairs, and the servants' door, which stood wide open, and then sat down in the vestibule to wait the result. As the drawing-room timepiece struck half-past eleven, he heard his mother ascend the stone staircase and pant before the door for a minute or two. Then she turned the handle, and seemed in consternation at finding the bar up.

"What can have possessed them to bar the door to-night, of all nights?" he heard her say, as she descended. The attempt was repeated at the servants' entrance, and then Raymond, returning to his study, saw the light disappear from the chapel window, and laughed long and silently at his mother's discomfiture.

Next morning at breakfast he could not resist asking her whether she had been disturbed about midnight by people walking about; and admired the imperturbability with which she assured all whom it might concern that she had retired to rest earlier than usual, and had slept remarkably well.

But madame could bide her time. One day, when Raymond had taken his mother-in-law for a drive, she suddenly made her appearance in Estelle's room, and ordered the nurse and baby out for a walk on the terrace. Five minutes later she had them both safe in her own carriage, and was whirling down the avenue and out on the road to Toulouse.

But not unobserved. Master Alfred, finding time hang heavy on his hands, had taken to the daily pursuit of bird-nesting, and was in the act of robbing a tree in the avenue when he observed the approach of the carriage. Leaving the nest for another time, he dropped from bough to bough, till he reached the branch nearest the ground, where he waited till the carriage passed; then, dropping lightly to the ground, he ran after it, and got up behind, intending to have a ride down the road and then come back for his nest. But as they rolled along he thought he heard an infant cry, and resolved to hang on and see the end of it. For it struck him that Madame de Montaigu was a sort of spiteful fairy, who would stick at nothing which could annoy his sister; and she might be going to hide the baby away somewhere.

Across the bridge and through the town they went, with Alfred clinging on behind—a most disgraceful spectacle—and so on through the Rue de la Pomme to the cathedral, where they stopped. Alfred, dodging behind the wheel, saw madame descend with nurse and baby, and enter the cathedral, where, after waiting time enough for them to take the holy water and say an *ave*, he followed, and tracked them to the baptistery on the left of the nave. The baptistery of St. Etienne, truth to tell, loses much of its imposing appearance from being turned into a store-room for the divers kinds of candles required for divine worship. However, none of the party present thought of that, the business in hand being to get the blessed child made a Christian as fast as possible. And Alfred, being hot and tired, was not at all sorry to have a candle-box to sit on while he watched the ceremony. He accompanied the carriage back as far as the entrance to the Mon-

taigu grounds, where he got off, ascended his tree, and brought down his nest in triumph.

Meantime, Mrs. Russell had returned from her drive, and was distracting herself with conjectures as to her boy's whereabouts; the last accounts of him being that he had been seen going towards the marsh down by the river. She and Raymond were about starting off to look for him, when Jean-Marie appeared, hauling the delinquent in, torn, scratched, and green all over, with his bird's-nest in his hand. Of course there was nothing to do except to kiss and scold him, and in the commotion caused by his being missed, and his reappearance, madame got the nurse and baby up to their own apartment through the garden door without remark, and dressed for dinner, in perfect charity with all the world, Estelle included.

But at dinner, Master Alfred, who, I am forced to admit, was in the habit of monopolizing the conversation without much regard for his elders, took occasion to remark to his brother-in-law:

"I was in Toulouse this morning."

"In Toulouse!" exclaimed his mother; "why, child, you must be tired to death. And how could you be so wicked as to walk all the way in the hot sun? You might have had a sunstroke."

"I did not walk, mamma. Madame was so kind as to take me."

"I!" cried madame. "What does the child mean?"

"Yes," continued Alfred. "I had a very jolly ride. Not inside; up behind, you know. I went all the way; and once a dirty street-boy called out 'Whip behind!' If I see that boy again, I'll lick him. And I went with madame and nurse into St. Etienne, and—"

"What nonsense! The boy has lost his head," madame cried, looking very angry.

"And I saw baby christened. And didn't he squall like a young pig, that's all!"

There was an awful silence. Old M. de Montaigu looked uncomfortable, madame triumphant, Mrs. Russell offended, and Raymond the very quintessence of scorn.

After dessert, instead of retiring to madame's drawing-room for coffee, Mrs. Russell opened her lips and said icily:

"You will allow me to bid you adieu, madame, and retire to my apartment, as I wish to set out early to-morrow morning. Monsieur, I wish you a good-evening." And with her most ceremonious courtesy she left the room, accompanied by her son-in-law, and followed by Alfred, in some doubt as to whether he should get a scolding or not.

"Mother-in-law," said Raymond, when they were up stairs, "I beg you to accept my humble excuses. If I had had the courage to break through the pernicious custom of living under the same roof as the parents after marriage, this might never have happened. I feel the insult to yourself, my dear madame, most acutely. I scarcely dare beg you to overlook it. But for my wife's sake, if you will be so good—"

But Mrs. Russell was implacable. She waved her hand, saying, "Let me hear no more, Raymond, I beg. I go to-morrow." And she added, moreover, to herself, "And I will never enter this house again as long as Comtesse Octavie is its mistress."

Comtesse Octavie, for her part, cared nothing whatever for Mrs. Russell's icy displeasure. She

had saved her grandson from a possible limbo, and she had frustrated her daughter-in-law's wish. That kept her happy for a long time.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SHOWS WHAT A WOMAN'S TONGUE CAN DO.

THE spirit of prophecy descended on madame in no small degree as the summer wore on, and her crony Madame de Luzarches got into the habit of shaking her head like a Chinese mandarin whenever Estelle's name was mentioned. For, of course, she was at the bottom of all this Anglomania of Raymond's. And what the future Comte de Montaigu would grow to, no one could dare say, at this rate. To begin with, the daily amount of soaping and sousing was a scandal, while as for the friction inflicted on that precious child, it was a veritable abomination. Yes, he was rubbed and scrubbed and rubbed again, as if he had been a young pig belonging to a peasant of Luz; and not a vestige of cap or swaddling-clothes! That was absurd, was it not then, in a woman who studied the Bible? "I told her, my dear friend," said madame, "that I had my director's word for it, that the infant Jesus was wrapped in swaddling-clothes; my director is a very well-read man, you know—and was not that sufficient precedent? And she laughed at me to the nose, my dear, she who gives herself airs of sanctity, and talks about educating the child to be a Christian philosopher! 'The arrogance of these Huguenots, it is overwhelming! I heard her forbid her maid, one day, to say *mon Dieu*—that simple exclamation—telling her it was offensive to the Deity. As if the *bon Dieu* had not something else to do besides to make note of all those trivial exclamations! And as for that child, it will grow up deaf and crooked, and then my son will be sorry. But I shall have warned him."

Yes, she had warned him. And in one respect, as she saw with grim satisfaction, her warning was come true. Estelle was making a hermit of herself, in her stupid senseless fondness for the child, and was further off than ever from satisfying Mrs. Russell's wish to see her a drawing-room queen. At the château, once up those stone stairs, and past that creaking oak door, she was queen—Raymond's queen, Bébé's queen; and with that little world at her feet, what cared she for the world outside? Madame's visitors—young creatures just promoted to the coveted title of madame, and taking their full swing of the joys of society for the first time in their lives—or oldish ladies, whose only reason for ever staying at home was an economical one, a hard necessity—considered this strange whim of Estelle's with a shrug of contemptuous pity, and expressed their thoughts delicately to madame on this newly-imported insular fashion. And madame, mourning viciously over her daughter-in-law's dereliction from plain duty, would confide to one and all, in whispers, that the worst was, her actually beguiling Raymond to stay at home with her.

"Yes, he positively goes out less and less. And their intimates are of the strangest description. One would think that with my experience they might have asked my advice in making up

their list of friends. But no, all is done without consulting me. And the consequence is, they have sometimes the strangest people staying with them. For instance, only lately they had that Gascon poet, Jasmin, to stay a week. I considered that insulting on Raymond's part, when one thinks that Jasmin is an Orleanist, and that our family has always adhered faithfully to the direct line. Yes, and I used to watch them day after day, walking up and down, up and down the terrace; Jasmin in the centre, with my son and his wife and that everlasting child beside him—yes, I've seen her carry that child for half an hour—then first he would spout, then Raymond, then he again; and she looking on all the while as if she could devour both with her two eyes. Then he complimenting her, and she kissing the child, pah! That's the kind of thing that went on. And when I have said, 'You don't cultivate Madame So-and-so, who is a woman perfectly well received here and at Paris,' she answers coolly, 'I think her frivolous, and Raymond does not care about her.' And then, you know, she is as heretical as ever, and that is a great grief to me, dear friend, as you may well suppose."

Madame's complaints always wound up with this chorus; this, and Raymond's infatuation for his Huguenot wife.

But on the second summer after her grandson's advent, seeing that he was neither awry, nor a squint, nor lame, she proposed to herself a slight distraction in the way of making a match between Mademoiselle Hortense d'Albaret, a young lady of seventeen, from the convent of the Sacred Heart, and a certain third cousin named Adrien Dubrenilh, who was voted by the family council to stand in great need of being reclaimed.

"And, *parbleu*," said old M. le Comte, between two pinches of snuff, "if you want him to become steady, go seek him a wife like my Huguenot daughter-in-law. It is a miracle the way in which that little witch has got Raymond under her thumb, with her soft voice and her quiet ways. He worships her shadow, I can see."

"He is failing fast; getting quite childish, you see, my dear," said madame aside to M. Adrien's mamma.

"Madame, I am doing nothing of the kind," rejoined M. le Comte, "and my hearing is remarkably good. My daughter-in-law sits with me, and reads the newspaper when you are at church; ay, and books of devotion too; any thing I ask her. And she wears quiet dresses which don't agitate my nerves."

"That is not to the point," said madame. And then they entered into the more interesting topic of Mademoiselle Hortense's dowry, branching off into a discussion on the marriage laws, which Madame de Montaigu had at her fingers' ends, as became an heiress and a practical woman. Hortense d'Albaret's dowry was not overwhelming, certainly, but she was an orphan with younger sisters, and it was highly necessary to establish her early in life, both on their account and her own. And M. Adrien was thoroughly well-born and well-bred, and once settled would make a charming husband, fit for a convent-bred girl.

While this matrimonial affair was pending,

that outside world, for which Estelle cared so little, began to find out that there was something good in her, after all. As soon as the archbishop became aware of the impression in her favor, he loudly proclaimed that his own impression had been favorable all along. The world—with in a radius of ten miles round the châtea—thereupon patted itself on the back, re-echoed monseigneur's dictum, silenced Madame de Montaign, and fixed an early day for young Madame Raymond's reconciliation to the Church. The day had already been fixed two or three times by a sanguine few, and they had been no more discouraged by the non-fulfillment of their predictions than are our English and Scotch prophets when the universe persists in going on beyond the date they have fixed for its final combustion.

For this sudden popularity, Estelle was partly indebted to her mother-in-law. People were getting weary of madame's continual wailing over her daughter-in-law's heresy, and began to remember that she had consented very freely to the marriage for the sake of the heretic's money. But the proximate cause was this: Estelle, wishing to show her gratitude for what had been to her—sad and tremulous as she was then, and fearful alike of prospect and of retrospect—a very advent, namely, her boy's birthday, had, after consulting her husband, formed a plan for a Children's Home, in which twelve of the most afflicted of God's little ones might be housed and nurtured.

She would willingly have done this in silence, seeking help in practical details from her husband only. But Raymond, though he detested the clergy as a body, felt strongly that unless protected by the Church, the whole scheme would fall to the ground. The Home, therefore, was placed under the Abbé d'Eyrieu's supervision, as chaplain and visitor, and both Raymond and his wife felt themselves fortunate in having to do with a priest whom at the same time they could so entirely respect as a man. But d'Eyrieu could not accept the offer of the chaplaincy without asking the permission of his diocesan, and so it all came out, and d'Eyrieu, quite unconsciously, got the credit of having brought about the whole thing, and was voted a man of rare talent by all the anti-Jesuit party. Madame, as soon as she saw which way the wind lay, steered her course accordingly, insisted on having the Home formally opened by Sa Grandeur, and invited a select party to meet him at breakfast. Sa Grandeur improved this opportunity of practising his spiritual blandishments on the future comtesse, all the more that it was evident the comte was getting sadly shaky, and that Cousin Octavie was consequently very near putting in her claim to the dowager's suite of rooms up stairs. So much for the archbishop and the Catholic party. If Estelle was less liberal in appearance to the Protestants, it was well atoned for in fact by the private donations which poured into their charity boxes. Even M. Cazères let pass her occasional remissness in attending his preaching, in consideration of her unbounded liberality; while as to this particular charity which she had organized, if it were solely for Catholics, well and good; Protestants might be tampered with, and good to the body would be gained by the loss of the soul. It was far better that he and his colleague should apply her donations at their own discretion.

Raymond, too, had his full share of popularity about this time, on quite another account.

To all who are not Languedocians, it may be a matter of very small moment, even supposing that they are aware of it at all, that there exists in Toulouse a most ancient literary institution, calling itself the Society of Floral Games, and deriving its origin from the ancient troubadours.

This society has for patroness and founder an apocryphal lady—Clémence Isaure—who, it is said, revived the science of the "Gai Sçavoir" in Toulouse, in the year of grace 1333. Apocryphal she is not to the members of the society; in proof of their belief in her, they make a pilgrimage yearly in May to the church of La Daurade, in which, say they, her tomb once was; and then, after an *ave* and a *pater* or so, pattered for the repose of her soul, they adjourn to the great hall of the ancient Capitouls, where, before a select audience, they distribute to various competitors prizes consisting of golden and silver flowers—the violet, amaranth, eglantine, marigold, and lily—for the best compositions in verse and essays in prose, for which the directors give the subject. The year before her marriage, Estelle had attended the distribution of prizes with Madame Fleury and Mademoiselle Mathilde, and had giggled, girl-like, behind her veil, at the mumblings of a toothless old gentleman, who, after making various halts, at last finished the reading of a paper which turned out to be a memoir of the Tomb of *La Reine Pédauque*, a lady of whom it need only be said that the immensity of her goodness and of her feet were equally celebrated. Mademoiselle Mathilde would have giggled willingly too, as soon as it was explained to her that the paper was all about a queen goose-leg, and that the writer of it had actually gained the first prize; but Madame Fleury was close by, and she was Toulousan born, and thought the floral games not an institution to be made game of; besides which, the pious young man to whom Mademoiselle Mathilde was destined, had written a poem, which, though Estelle had thought it miserable trash, was listened to with equanimity, and gained the silver lily. This was of course important to Mademoiselle Mathilde, and she had felt aggrieved that it should not be known by all her friends that she was to be the wife of such a talented young man as M. Theodore Beaucens.

This year, Estelle had attended the distribution of prizes with a feeling that it was no longer for her an affair to be laughed at, even though the papers should all be mumbled over by old gentlemen with never a tooth in their heads. Even the dust-covered, noseless statue of Clémence Isaure in her cold niche had gained a right to her respect. For Raymond was a member of the institution, and a poem of his was to be read, which Estelle was sure ought to gain the first prize. She felt her heart beat when the opening lines were read; and glanced round timidly as the reading proceeded, to see whether the subject carried the audience with it. As she marked one face and another roused to an expression of lively interest, the exultant feeling in her own bosom rose far higher than it did in Raymond's. She could feel wholly proud of her husband; he was criticising his work, and wishing he had done it better. The poem gained the first prize, and people came up to congratulate. Raymond, for the first time in his life, felt his friends' praise to

be undeserved, and got away outside the hall. It was Estelle who received these adulations: they were doubly sweet to her, because she believed every word, and she treasured up the honeyed phrases to repeat to her husband. But the summit of her exultation was reached when Jasmin wrote telling Raymond that he would be heard of in Paris before long. Then Raymond himself took heart again, and consented to see some merit in his poem. Jasmin had criticised his performances too often for him not to believe that his praise was genuine. One thing in Jasmin's letter was distasteful to Raymond. Jasmin advised him to keep clear of politics. And Raymond did not wish to keep clear of them; but, on the contrary, wished to increase his knowledge of such things as are considered necessary for a politician to be acquainted with, hoping that at some distant day France might be a republic, and he himself a deputy and leader of a party. Estelle did not go the length of wishing for a republic; she had never as yet been able to see the beauty and perfection of a republican form of government. Besides, if to arrive at this perfect state of affairs it was necessary for a nation to wade through such seas of blood as France had done, she would rather that things should go on in the old way. In spite of all Raymond's arguments, she had not as yet been brought to see that these seas of blood might be a "holy necessity." What she did think it no harm to wish for was, that there might some day be a free Parliament in France, where a man might speak out bravely his own thoughts, and express the wishes of his constituents, without fear of the Tuileries. But as such a thing as a free Parliament did not seem to be within the reach of the nation at present, her wish was not an ever-present one. That Bébé should be well and fat, and that Raymond's political studies should not interfere with his writing poetry, were the things of greatest importance to her. As Bébé grew older, he was taught that though he might do what he pleased anywhere else in the house, papa's study was a sacred place, in which he must keep quiet and touch nothing. So well was he made to understand this, that his father never found it necessary to shut himself up for writing and reading, but could read politics or write verses with the boy on his knee and Estelle by his side, ready to take her pet as soon as silence and stillness became wearisome to him. Raymond got to think at last that he wrote better in such company than when alone. Whether he did or not matters little to this story, which has to do with him only so far as his life affected Estelle's. But under different conditions—as, for instance, that his wife had been a fussy, rustling woman like his mother, or that Bébé had been multiplied by half a dozen—I am inclined to suppose that Raymond, in spite of a finely-balanced nervous system—or, if you like better, the natural love of a Frenchman for noise and clatter—would have perched himself and his writing-table up in the turret furthest from the nursery. But to return.

The terms of the marriage-contract having been settled, Madame de Montaigu became extremely busy about her *protégée's* wedding outfit; what with that, and the putting on of a little more worldly polish than the good nuns had thought either necessary or desirable for a girl whom they chose to believe destined to the cloister, madame

had her hands full. Hortense was docile enough, having practised unquestioning obedience at the convent almost ever since her childhood; and madame began to think that it would be a much pleasanter task to take her out into society after her marriage, than it had been in the case of the "marble Englishwoman." Hortense was afraid of Estelle at first, having heard her stigmatized, both in the convent and out of it, as a "hardened heretic." But the attraction of a romp with Bébé overcame her fears, and she got at last into the habit of spending her mornings up stairs, while madame was at church or engaged in household matters. With Estelle only, she would prattle away like an eager, ignorant child. With Raymond there, she relapsed into the demure convent-girl, and would sit with hands folded and eyes cast down, as if she were in the presence of the mother-superior, where it was penance to speak except in answer to a question.

She sat by Estelle one hot morning, playing as usual with Bébé, and, Raymond being away, her tongue ran on unchecked on all topics connected with her approaching marriage. She should be allowed to wear a Cashmere shawl, velvet, Honiton lace, feathers, and jewels; she would read novels; she would read even the Bible, if her director allowed it. She intended to make the Abbé d'Eyrieu her director, because she had heard him say he liked young people to enjoy themselves while they could. When her sisters were grown up, she should have them to live with her, and try to establish them in life, as their mother would have done had she lived; as Madame de Montaigu was kindly doing for her.

"It is a dreadful thing," said the convent girl, "to have so few relations as I have, and to be an orphan. I was getting sick of the convent, and the Sisters were always trying to persuade me that I had a vocation. I scarcely ever saw my own little sisters, who were in the lowest class. If this match had not turned up for me, I had made up my mind to ask our director to speak to the Mother about establishing me, the next time I went to confession. There is something I want to ask you," she said abruptly, after a pause.

"Well?" said Estelle, who had been trying to put herself in the position of a girl bred among nuns and priests, and wondering what would have been the result on her own mind of such surroundings for, say, ten years.

"I do so want to know," said the girl, eagerly. "You are a Protestant, it is true; but you are married; you ought to know something about it. Is it wrong to love one's husband passionately? I asked once, and the nuns said one must only love God and the Holy Virgin so. And I got a penance for having asked the question. Do tell me, you who are married. Is it wrong?"

"God forbid!" said the young wife. "My child, there are many things I do not know; but this much I can say with certainty: Love your husband with all your heart and strength; in the same degree, though not in the same kind, as the nuns tell you to love the Holy Virgin."

"You say that as if you meant it," said Hortense, eying Estelle curiously. "One more thing. Is it allowable—with regard to propriety, I mean—to love one's husband before marriage?"

"Oh, I don't know any thing about that,"

cried Estelle, laughing. "You had better ask Madame de Montaigu, who has so much more experience than I."

"I should like to know," Hortense pursued, pertinaciously. "It is permitted in England, is it not?"

"I can not tell you any thing about it," said Estelle, who thought Hortense was getting tiresome. Hortense was silent, and played with Bébé, while Estelle resumed the work her chattering had interrupted; it was the copying of some ill-written and much-corrected manuscript of Raymond's. By-and-by she looked up brightly, saying, "I hear my husband coming."

"I hear nothing," said Hortense, putting Bébé off her lap and listening.

"My dear child, you must be deaf! He is half way up the avenue. I wish he would not ride at such a mad pace."

"I hear him well enough now," said Hortense. "I shall say good-bye, Madame Raymond; I know you want to get rid of me. You always do when monsieur comes in from his ride." And with a pout, half-fun, half-earnest, Hortense took her departure.

Estelle sat listening. Then she rose and went to her window, just over the entrance, and dropped a rose from the bouquet on the table right on to Raymond's head as he dismounted. She held the venetian in her hand, expecting him to look up and speak. But he, giving no heed, told the servant in waiting to look well after the horse, and passed hastily to the inner court, where, the doors being all wide open, Estelle heard him asking where his mother was. "So," she said to herself, "he seeks her, not me, first. That must be for something special. Usually he is not so eager to be worried by her after a long ride." She waited for half an hour, then three-quarters, and had made her mind up to feel aggrieved, when Raymond suddenly burst in, hot and angry as a Spanish wind, and threw himself down on the couch nearest her chair, fuming at a great rate at somebody or something.

Estelle waited prudently till the storm of words had somewhat spent itself, and then asked the very natural question:

"What is it all about?"

"That brute, Adrien! If ever a man deserved a kicking!" And, in default of the said Adrien, Raymond spurned a sofa-cushion which Hortense had left on the ground after a game of Bo-peep with Bébé. Estelle asked what Adrien had been doing.

"What was that story about the man who had his house swept clean for him, and then went and took to himself seven other devils worse than the first? I'll never speak to the fellow again; I'll cut him, if I meet him in this very house—if my mother is such a fool as to have him here, which I hope she won't."

"What has he been doing? I thought he had ranged himself, as your mother puts it."

"Heaven save the mark!" ejaculated Raymond. "I fear Adrien was past ranging when she took him in hand. I can't tell you all about it; and if I could it would not mend matters. It is all very intricate, and very disgraceful. And the worst is, he does not care a rap. You can understand this, that he hasn't got two hundred francs left in the world. That tells something, I think."

"And the wedding that is to be next month!"

"Is to be? Ought it to be? If that child were your sister, would you not try to stop it, when I tell you that Adrien has failed in every promise he made my mother when she undertook to make the match for him?"

"I was not thinking of that. But what will Madame de Montaigu say? She will never brook the failure of her own plan. She will talk of bringing him to order. And do it too."

"Confound her plans! Let him go to the dogs his own way." And then a step was heard in the ante-room very like that of Madame la Comtesse, and Raymond, declaring that he had had enough of her for a while, retreated, saying, "Tell me when she is gone."

Madame gave a sharp rap, and entered, before her daughter-in-law could say, "Come in."

"Where is thy husband?" she asked, looking round majestically, as she took a seat on the sofa.

"He is somewhere in the house," said Estelle; "he was with me just now. He is vexed about your cousin, Monsieur Adrien."

"Heavens!" cried madame, pointing to the farther end of the room. "Look! look at that child! it is a shame to permit him to try his strength in that manner. He has actually raised himself to stand by that chair. It makes me feel quite faint." As she said this, she placed herself in a reclining attitude, and opened her smelling-bottle.

Estelle felt nettled, and said coldly, "Dear me, he does that so often now, that I don't notice it. Why, he crawls about here all day, and stands up and tumbles down twenty times an hour. Don't you, my pet?"

Bébé, hearing himself addressed, turned his head, lost his balance, and came down plump, eliciting a loud scream from his grandmamma.

"I beg that may not occur again while I am here," she cried. "I beg that he may be sent away, or that you will take him up. His legs will be broken one day; they are crooked now. If you had half a dozen sons, you might make experiments upon them, but with only one—"

Estelle walked across the room with a gesture of impatience, and snatched her boy up in her arms. A very angry rejoinder rose to her lips, but she swallowed it, and sat down, giving Bébé his shoes to play with.

"About Monsieur Adrien," she began, for the sake of saying something. That turned the channel of madame's thoughts to its former direction.

"Adrien," she cried, "is an arch-scurdrel. I have said the word. There! I am out of all patience with him." And then followed a very clear catalogue of Adrien's misdeeds; for being, as she said, out of all patience, she did not mince her words. There seemed, indeed, to Estelle, nothing for it but that Adrien must go to the dogs his own way, as her husband had said.

"I am sorry for poor little Hortense," she said. "I fear her heart was set on it. She seemed so grateful to you for making the match." Madame stared. "Grateful? Oh yes, I do not complain of her. It is Adrien who is ungrateful. If the affair had not been settled, I would have broken it off, I am so angry with him. I think I would break it off even now, if he were not a connection."

"I can not see why that should be a reason," said Estelle. "You say yourself, mother-in-law,

that he is a thorough scoundrel. Are you just to Hortense in marrying her to him? Are you giving her a chance of happiness?"

Something very like this had Raymond said an hour before, and had angered his mother greatly. In fact, they had had one of their worst encounters; madame's blood was boiling over yet.

"Happiness!" she cried, contemptuously. "Who ever said I wanted her happiness? You talk like a shepherdess of Arcadia. She wanted establishing, and Adrien wanted ranging, for the credit of the family. It is a marriage of convenience, such as I made myself: such as my mother made before me. I am angry with Adrien because he has broken his promises to me. He made none to Hortense that I know of. For me it will be rather more expensive an affair than I bargained for. But no one shall say I am wanting in family feeling."

"And you mean, then," cried Estelle impetuously, "to give her—that child—to a man whom you consider a disgrace to your family, just because he is one of your family? A man whom my husband declares he will have nothing to do with!"

"Upon my word," sneered madame, "your husband is mighty particular."

"My husband is right, madame. And you are doing Hortense d'Albaret a cruel wrong, if you do not break off this marriage."

Madame rose. "I did not come here to be dictated to," she said, in a voice that trembled with anger. "What I came for was to say that I will not have either of you meddling between me and Hortense. She is in my charge, remember."

"The child has a tender little heart," cried Estelle, not at all afraid, although she saw by madame's eyes what a passion she was in. "She will begin by loving her husband; and he won't care a straw for her after the first week. She will be hurt, shocked, disgusted. Perhaps they will quarrel. Then they will hate each other. And then—then—"

"Hortense will take life as a rational being should, probably," said the comtesse. "You forget that you are a woman of twenty, and talk like a lackadaisical creature in a story-book."

"I am only speaking what I believe my husband feels," said Estelle.

"Thou annoyest me with thy interminable husband," cried madame, shrugging her shoulders—"who gives himself these airs of Puritan, without being one whit better than Adrien, scoundrel as he is. Bah! All the men are alike, thou poor trusting ninny!"

"Mother-in-law!" Estelle exclaimed, rising haughtily as she spoke. Then she added, "But you are angry, and don't care what you say. Nevertheless, I beg you not to say that again."

"Why not?" said madame, defiantly. She saw she had ruffled her usually calm daughter-in-law to some purpose now, and felt diabolically glad. "Why not?" she repeated, looking Estelle over from head to foot.

"Because it is an insult to him, to me!" Estelle cried, every nerve quivering with anger. "Because it is utterly untrue. My husband! Raymond! To think that you, madame, of all women, should mention him in the same breath with that wicked Adrien! You, his mother, say that! It is too shameful!" She sank down in her chair again, and hid her face in her boy's lit-

tle neck. She felt she could not have spoken a word more, or her passion would have dissolved itself in tears. And she was determined not to give her mother-in-law the pleasure of seeing her cry.

"You stand up for him with a devotedness worthy of a better cause," said the comtesse, moving towards the door. "You are dreaming, daughter-in-law, and will awake one day. May the dream be long, as well as pleasant; I have no objection. When you do awake, don't accuse me of letting you dream too long—that's all!" And with that she departed, humming a tune with her cracked voice.

Estelle shut the door as soon as the rustle of her dress had ceased, and burst into a passion of tears. She felt as if she could bear the weight of her mother-in-law's temper no longer; as if she must beg her husband to take her away, although she had vowed to herself over and over again that she would never be the one to separate mother and son. But madame had gone too far now, she told herself. She had tried to undermine her faith in her husband; that faith which had grown so steadily ever since her marriage; from which her love had sprung. For she did love him now, she declared to herself. How could she do otherwise? Was he not worthy? And was he not her boy's father? Yet even while she was making up her mind that she and madame must live apart, there rose before her the difficulty of separation. Her husband would inquire her special cause of vexation. How could she tell him? And would he feel justified in separating their household without a special reason, knowing the deeply-rooted prejudice of the country towards living under the same roof with the parents? Even supposing him to be satisfied of the necessity of a separate home, what would people say? They would blame her; call her mischief-maker. So they might. But they would blame him too, for his weakness in being so led away by her as to fail in the respect and deference due to parents from an only son. She felt that she could even better bear her mother-in-law's viper tongue at home, than be conscious that she had brought blame on her husband from abroad. And so she tried to leave off crying, and decided on keeping silence, as hitherto, on all those vexed questions which regarded madame. But now that she had once begun to think of this incompatibility of temper, every instance of it that had occurred since her marriage rushed into her mind; all the petty slights, the stinging words, the unwarrantable interference to which she had been subjected. She tried in vain to stop herself; the tears would not be forced back now; and when Raymond came back, his tempestuousness soothed for the nonce by a good cigar, she was still sobbing bitterly, and could not answer him when he, astounded, demanded what was the matter.

His face grew dark. He knelt beside her, and smoothed her hair. "My mother is at the bottom of this," he said; "what has she been saying?"

"Never mind. Nothing," his wife said at last by a strong effort. "I was silly to be so vexed. It won't happen again." And she wiped her eyes and tried to smile, and put her face up for him to kiss.

Raymond did not choose to be put off in this way. He knew his wife was not given to crying

for nothing. "I must know about this, Estelle," he said, very kindly, but firmly.

"No, no," she cried. "Do not ask. An hour hence I shall have forgotten. Why should I tell you? Women say sharp things and don't mean them, half their time. I was silly to care."

"Sharp things, eh? I shall beg her to keep her sharp things for me. I can answer her in her own key."

He rose and walked to the door. She flew after him and drew him back. "Do not, for my sake," she cried. "She only vexed me with her sharp tongue, as she vexes every body."

"She may vex whom she will, but not you," said he. "Tell me what she said, for if you don't I'll have it from her."

Estelle began to tremble. "Oh, Raymond, why should you mind, if I say I don't?" she cried, looking up piteously at him.

He turned again to the door, saying, "No woman shall make my wife cry, as I saw her crying just now, while I can prevent it."

"Come back," she cried; "come and sit down. Oh, Raymond, why won't you understand, when I tell you not to ask? Things only get worse by repeating."

He sat down, and drew her upon his knee. "This is what I understand," he said: "my wife does not trust me."

This was worse than ever. She could have torn her eyes out for having cried so at madame's stinging speeches. But even a quarrel with his mother was better than that he should think his own wife failed in her trust of him. She began speaking hurriedly:

"It all began about that horrid Adrien. She said all sorts of things against him; said he was a disgrace to her family, and so forth; and yet she did not intend to break off the marriage with Hortense. And—perhaps I ought not to have spoken, but I could not help it; I was so sorry for Hortense's being so thrown away—I said she was not acting justly to Hortense, and that I was sure you felt the same as I did. And she got very angry; she was in a bad temper when first she came up, and made remarks about Bébé; and she said one thing and another, and then she said—she said that you were just as bad—as bad as that wretch Adrien. And I could not bear that! Oh, how could she be so cruel—so cruel!" she cried, throwing her arms round her husband's neck and bursting into tears again. "How dared she speak so falsely of my Raymond? Raymond, I hate her! I can't help it. She might have found fault with me and my doings to the end of the chapter, and I would not have minded, but to say *that*—There! now you know what I was crying for. Kiss me, dear, and don't let us speak of it any more."

Raymond touched her cheek mechanically, and then put her off his knee, and walked through the window on to the balcony.

She saw that his face was very pale, and thought it was with anger at his mother: for that was just his way when he was provoked at any thing; he would be pale and silent first, and storm afterwards. Bébé, all this time, had been sitting on the floor, trying to put on his shoes. Now he began to feel himself neglected, and whimpered accordingly. She took him in her lap, and soothed him by singing softly a French nursery rhyme.

"Oh, boy, boy!" she cried, suddenly breaking off in the midst, "grow up like your father; like your father, my dear, not like your cousin Adrien."

Raymond heard her, as he leaned moodily against the wall by the window. He smote his forehead with his outstretched hand, muttering something to himself, and entered the room.

"Don't tell the boy what is not true," he said, passing quickly to the back of her chair; "I am not so unlike Adrien as you think."

She jumped up, and stood looking at him with her boy in her arms. She thought he was out of his mind, or that she had heard wrong.

"Don't look at me like that!" he cried vehemently. "Oh, what an old viper my mother is!" And then he began walking up and down the room, with his head in his hands, as if he wanted to say something stronger, but would not.

"Raymond," his wife ventured to say.

He came and stood at the back of her chair again, and just touched her shoulder as he spoke.

"My dear—for you are my dear—I don't want to shock you. I would never have said a word; but after what my mother said, if I don't speak I shall feel such a hypocrite! I can not be that, even to keep your love, *mignonne*. She was very cruel, dear; she had no right to say what she did; but—she was not quite wrong, not so completely wrong as—as you suppose."

"Are you—are you out of your mind?" she said, turning as pale as he. "Do you know what you are saying?" She got up and looked at him. "You have been riding in the hot sun, and I am sure you have got a sunstroke. You are looking like death, Raymond!"

"I wish I had got a sunstroke," said he; "but I have not. I know what I am saying."

She sat down on a seat away from him, like one stunned. She heard him speaking, but his voice seemed miles away, and the words brought no meaning to her ear. At last she became conscious that he was saying something like this:

"—Before I even knew your name, I devoted myself to you, and I have kept my vow. I swore to myself that if there were a heaven, you should show me the way; and you have shown me. . . . How long have we been married? I don't know. The time seems long, and yet short; but I haven't a notion how I existed before. And yet it seems strange, even now, that I should have you—*you*, all to myself. . . . You, whom I saw first in a ball-room, sitting quiet and pale, all in white, with a grave mouth, and dreamy eyes with that odd look in them, as if you were looking through the wall and saw heaven on the other side. I got into corners and watched you dancing; you didn't seem to care about it, and I thought you were sad about something. I never rested till I found out who you were. . . . What can I say? How can I make you believe in my love? I tell you I belong to you till death. Will you let an old woman's sharp tongue come between us?"

She tried to speak, but she felt stupid, and the words would not come; only a sob escaped her lips. He thought her silence was condemning him, and began walking swiftly up and down the room, gathering vehemence as he went.

"What! you sit there like a block of ice? You have no pity, nothing but contempt, not a grain of love? Would it not stand? Am I to

find my curse where I had my blessing? Why did you set me so high? Why did you ever imagine me to be such a spotless being? See, now you will hate me!"

Her lips quivered a little at this. Why indeed had she set him so high? And yet, how should she set him anywhere if not on high? Her boy's father, so true, so tender, so chivalrous even in the trivialities of their daily life! It was the surprise of it all that stunned her and kept her dumb. He came and flung himself down beside her, grasping her dress with his hands.

"Estelle! Estelle!" he cried passionately, "speak; say even that you hate me—tell me to leave you—any thing but this terrible silence. I will do any thing, any thing you wish. I will go away, if you like—away from you and the boy. Only speak! Are you so hard? Yet they say God forgives. Would to God I were dead! You would love me then!" He hid his face in the folds of her dress, and his voice died away in a sob.

That roused her. She had been in a maze, and his wild words and vehement gestures only seemed to confuse her more. Now this much became clear—that he loved her very dearly and that he was in sorrow. That was enough for her. She let the boy slide away from her lap, caught her husband's hands in her own, and kissed his cheek. He felt hers was wet as it touched his. "Don't waste your precious tears on me," he cried. "What am I, that I should be wept over? Only a man that loves you. What of that? I have shocked you. Go!" He tried, as he spoke, to take his hands away. She let them go, but put her arms round his neck instead.

"My dear—my dear." And that was all she could say for a while. . . .

"Is it to be all the same between us?" he asked, at length.

"Not quite. Not quite the same to me, for I never knew before how dearly I loved you, my Raymond."

The color flashed back into his face as she kissed him.

"You never gave me a kiss like that before," he said.

"You are so noble, so brave," she said. "I had no idea how brave. You are mine. I hold you forever!"

"Till death!" he murmured, kissing her hands.

"Till death? No," she cried, with sudden inspiration. "Once united, shall death separate us? We are one for ever and ever!"

And when old Jean-Marie appeared with a face of wrath to tell monsieur that Madame la Comtesse had appropriated Madame Raymond's pony-carriage which was standing ready for her usual drive, and had ordered her coachman to drive her into Toulouse—these two were so happy that they did not care one whit, although at another time both would have felt deeply annoyed at madame's want of ceremony. They went out and walked under the shade of the beech-woods instead. Both felt that a new epoch in their lives had begun; that unknown depths in the heart of each had been sounded. And heart answered to heart in silence. At length, as the Angelus rang out, and they turned their steps towards the château, Raymond said:

"Love, my mind is made up; we will go to Paris."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ARCHBISHOP PUTS HIS FINGER IN THE PIE.

It was not to be supposed that Madame de Montaigu would acquiesce in Raymond's decision without a struggle. Finding that he turned a deaf ear to all her arguments, she resolved to try what the archbishop's eloquence could do towards the prevention of the contemplated scandal. She found Sa Grandeur in the worst of tempers. The Provincial of the Jesuits had just made him the request—with a mixture of audacity and humility—that he would officiate at the consecration of the new church, whose erection had already given him so much umbrage. But Sa Grandeur put aside his mortification to listen to his cousin. She was a person of too much consequence to be put off, and there was nothing for it except to promise to bring his personal influence to bear on her son, and, if necessary, on her daughter-in-law; who, madame assured him, was a most incomprehensible young woman, mischief-maker, and what not; a very thorn in her side, and, in spite of her modest looks, by no means fit to be trusted away from maternal surveillance. Thus prejudiced, Sa Grandeur came out to Château Montaigu, installed himself in madame's drawing-room, and proceeded to arraign Raymond and Estelle for the alleged want of respect and filial devotion—himself being judge, jury, and counsel for the prosecution, all in one. M. le Comte fidgeted in his chair, and took snuff continuously. Estelle remained silent, turning white and red by turns, while Sa Grandeur put forth his *ultimatum*; to the effect that, as it seemed that Madame Raymond and Madame de Montaigu unhappily could not agree, it would be better to think seriously of an amicable separation, which should not lacerate the parental hearts of monsieur and madame. Instead of the contemplated move to Paris, he begged to propose that Madame Raymond should reside somewhere in or near Toulouse, under the guidance of some confidential friend, and within reach of a daily, or at any rate a frequent, visit from her husband, who should continue to reside under his father's roof. The child, of course, to remain with his mother until other arrangements be entered into, or till such time as it was judged fit to begin his religious training (monseigneur did not choose to suppose Raymond other than a Catholic; in the presence of the comtesse propriety forbade such a supposition). As to pecuniary matters, he believed he was right in saying—here madame nodded emphatically—that no obstacle would be raised by monsieur or madame to any arrangement Madame Raymond might wish to be made. Madame's sole object was to live in peace, and to enjoy the respect and affection of her family.

Raymond had listened to all this with a determination to hear every thing that Sa Grandeur chose to say. He now rose, and said:

"Enough, monseigneur! As a married man, let me observe what I might have known well enough before: that a priest is no fit judge between husbands, wives, and mothers-in-law. Were it not that you are ignorant of our side of the question, I should think you meant to insult both Estelle and myself. Adieu, monseigneur. I leave you with Molière's advice: 'Get a better pair of spectacles.'"

And he quitted the room with his wife, leaving his father and mother, and above all the archbishop, aghast at his audacity. Madame burst into tears. "It cuts me to the heart," she cried, "that a son of mine should affront you so. It is all the fault of his wretched wife."

"*Peste !*" said the old comte, who had nearly emptied his snuff-box during the interview, "Estelle never said a single word."

"That was just a piece of her slyness. If she kept silence with her tongue, she said enough with her eyes. I saw the look she gave when he made that impertinent speech. Telling a prince of the Church to get better spectacles, forsooth!"

Sa Grandeur's temper was not mollified by Raymond's rebuff, especially as he felt that there might possibly be a grain of right on the other side. He refused the comtesse's hospitality, and drove off, saying as he entered his carriage: "*Si autem ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus.*"

Madame did not see fit to take leave of her recalcitrant children. Early on the morning of their departure, she carried off Hortense, and remained in Toulouse till they were gone. She would have carried off her husband too, but he refused point-blank, saying he would not be mixed up in her quarrels. He embraced Estelle and the child, lamenting that they could not remain and live in peace. "I see many things," he said, "but I am old, and can not contend, as thou knowest, pretty one. But I shall sadly miss thee. Who now will read daily to me, and bring me a rose for my button-hole? But it avails not to complain. We know who in this house has a tongue, don't we?" So the old man dismissed them, and went back to his solitary room and his game of patience.

It was not till Estelle was fairly settled in Paris that she realized the full enormity of the archbishop's proposition. During her residence at the château all her energies had been absorbed in the avoidance of offense towards her mother-in-law. Even husband and child had occupied little of her thoughts in comparison. Now that she was able to enjoy their society, and lavish her devotion on them without hindrance, madame's cruelty stood out in its true proportions. She scarce knew which to detest most—the hard-heartedness which had prompted the project of separation, or the cowardice which had made the archbishop its mouthpiece. Then, too, arose another fear, which had not hitherto possessed her. This was, that her boy would be withdrawn from her influence as he grew older, on pretense of instruction in the Catholic religion. As long as Raymond was angry with his mother, well and good. He would not go within reach of her, she knew. But, his anger evaporated, her father-in-law or the clergy, or both, would try to bring about a reconciliation. They should go back to Château Montaigne, and the last state of things would be worse than the first. Madame had had the child baptized by a Catholic priest, in defiance of Raymond's wishes. Was it likely she would stand by with the child within reach, and see him educated in his mother's tenets? And then, if any thing happened to Raymond—

A glance at Raymond might have dispelled the cold shudder that ran through her frame as this idea took possession of her mind. He was in full

enjoyment of his usual splendid health, handsomer than ever, if possible; more equable in temper, certainly—madame being too far off to ruffle him.

But this new apprehension was precisely of the kind that can not be laid to rest at will. Estelle could not impart it to her husband, and be laughed out of it, or get it explained away. It had to be kept down as best it might. And she felt like a deceiver at times, when, after a short absence, Raymond would complacently regard her rapture at seeing him again as a proof of her undivided devotion to him, whereas her conscience told her that the joy at his return, like the misery during his absence, arose not so much from pure wifely attachment, as from the thought that while she had him she had her boy safe. And, danger from sickness apart, during any one of these absences a railway accident might occur, and he might be brought back to her a mangled corpse. Some expression of this fear escaped her on one occasion, when Raymond, who had been visiting some exiled countrymen at Brussels, returned several hours later than he was expected, in consequence of an accident happening to another train on the same line. He laughed at her at first, then told her it was highly complimentary to him that she should have been so anxious, but left off bantering when he touched her hands and felt what a fever she was in; and said kindly that when detained another time he would send a telegram. "Thank you," she murmured, "for not thinking me too silly. But you know I have nothing in the world except you and the boy."

"I say ditto," replied he. "Fathers and mothers don't count here, do they? Mignonne, how did we manage to put up with grandmamma's tongue so long? I say, how did we do it?"

"I hope we shall never have to do so again," said she.

"Again? Why, of course you don't imagine I shall be such a fool as to put my neck under the yoke when by good luck I had got released from it."

It was pleasant to hear him say so, at least; and she tried not to feel disappointed when he said afterwards, as if he had been considering the matter, that it might be necessary for him to go down to the château from time to time, just to show that he was not on bad terms with his father, and to look over the estate with the steward. And then, in order to drive what he knew to be a disagreeable topic out of her mind, he insisted on taking her to hear a new opera. She would rather have staid at home, but complied with his wish, knowing that he would not have understood hers. So time went on, and, except for this one fear, she could count herself completely happy. Raymond did not choose to go to Court, and was particular to an extreme whom he introduced to his wife; so that there was little chance of her being overwhelmed with society, and what they had of it was literary rather than fashionable, as was but natural with Raymond's literary tastes and republican tendencies.

To return to madame. She said her say unchecked among her Toulousan friends; and set down the young people's departure entirely to the malice and ill-will of Estelle, who, she declared, had tried to set her own husband against her. People might believe as much of this as they chose. Estelle did not look like an intriguing woman, cer-

tainly. But the absent are always wrong; and she had never deigned to exhibit her side of the question, contenting herself, when questioned, by saying simply, "It is my husband's wish." Whereas, every body who knew Madame de Montaigu had heard her say at some time or other that Raymond was completely at his wife's beck and call, and that she had no longer any influence whatever. But in the same breath in which she proclaimed her desolation, she let all the world know that she had found comfort in Monsieur Adrien and Made-moiselle Hortense, who would be son and daughter to her. They were married at her desire in the chapel, which was cleaned up and hastily decorated for the purpose; and Sa Grandeur, to show that he did not bear malice, pronounced the nuptial benediction himself. This event, and yet more, the consecration of the Jesuit church by the archbishop—which, by-the-way, gave the poor old man a fit of illness from sheer vexation—caused Raymond and his wife to be completely forgotten by all except the Abbé d'Eyrieu and the poor to whom he dispensed their charities. During the last quarrel at the château, d'Eyrieu had been absent, passing the prescribed period of yearly retirement at a religious house at some distance from Toulouse. Owing to this, his meditation had not been used to quell the strife; but he had been spared the discomfort of differing either tacitly or openly from the comtesse and monseigneur. He got into the habit of passing an hour almost daily with M. de Montaigu, whose sight was rapidly failing, and who missed his daughter-in-law more in consequence. He was never tired of telling d'Eyrieu of her sweetness and gentleness, and the care she took to cull him his favorite flowers, and to retail the last new joke, or the news that Raymond had picked up in Toulouse. She had learned dominos and tric-trac and écarté simply to amuse the poor old grand-papa.

"I am a good Catholic," the old gentleman would say. "I desire nothing except to make my salvation; you know my sentiments, M. l'Abbé: but I will say, that if all heretics are like my daughter-in-law, there must be a little corner for them, sooner or later. I tell you St. Peter himself would not hold out if she begged to be let in with that sweet little voice of hers."

And d'Eyrieu would answer evasively (wishing with all his soul that St. Peter might be of the same mind as M. le Comte), and, looking at his watch, would say, "Shall we proceed? My time will be up." And they would become absorbed in the game again.

For a long time the only communication that Estelle and her husband had with the château was through the curé, whose quarterly letters containing the reports concerning the Children's Home, and other charities supported by Estelle, also gave an epitome of local news, and long, kind messages from M. de Montaigu. Madame did at length forgive her son sufficiently to write to him on a New Year's Day; but she had let one pass over without doing so, and on this occasion thought proper to omit all mention of her daughter-in-law's name. Raymond was so nettled at the slight thus offered to his wife, that madame's overture of reconciliation rather widened than healed the breach; and instead of going down to the château to see his father, he took his wife a tour in Brittany during the summer

months. So another year passed away, and Estelle's fear of her mother-in-law's influence ceased to intrude itself so constantly on her mind.

CHAPTER XXX.

JULIA WEAVES A WEB.

THE sweet Devonshire lanes were fragrant with the odor of fallen leaves, and the evenings began to close in chilly and misty. At the Court and at the Hall each family had returned to its accustomed ways; much to Julia's dissatisfaction.

For, at the Court, Mrs. Vivian could be much more constantly by her son's side than in London; and although Julia took credit to herself for never having let slip an opportunity during her stay at Hyde Park Gardens, for all the good she had done she might as well have staid at home. The baronet seemed as far from the point to which she wished to bring him as ever.

The first thing she heard when she got back to Wembury was that Herbert, now Captain Waldron, was in England; and further, that it was shrewdly guessed he had come back to get a wife. The admiral had taken a fancy to Herbert: a fine fellow, he said, now that the nonsense had been knocked out of him: and he wrote and asked him to come down and spend September at Wembury. "We can get some shooting over the Vivian preserves," he said, "and amuse the fellow."

Sir Louis had extended to the admiral the invitation which had come regularly the last week in August, during the old baronet's lifetime, "to get his gun ready for the 1st." Herbert, who was in the north with his regiment, wrote gladly to accept the admiral's hospitality; but when the time came he was kept from Wembury by a return of the ague he had caught in India. The admiral was put out at this, and insisted on his trying the change to Devonshire as soon as he could get the doctor's leave. He was rather crosser than usual for some days, till he got a letter from Herbert to say that he considered his visit only deferred. "If he would but marry some nice girl, now," thought the old man, "and settle down somewhere near, so that we could drop in and see each other!" And he sighed, looking round on all his useless daughters, growing up and growing old, and never a one among them all that would ever be worth her salt.

"If either of them would but help me in my barometrical readings," he thought, "that would be some good. But no; no good to ask them; they couldn't be got to understand the thing, the silly fools." And then he sighed again, for he thought what a comfort a son would have been. Henrietta noticed it.

"Papa, dear, is any thing the matter?" Her voice had a sympathetic ring in it very different to the old voice, and she had learned to say "papa, dear." Her face had lost its wizened look, too, although she was as pale as ever, and thinner, if possible.

The admiral brightened up a little as she spoke. "No, my dear, nothing, nothing."

But Lizzie, pert as a sparrow, observed, "Papa's afraid that Cousin Herbert will be falling in love with you, Henrietta." She did not

intend her father to hear, but he did, and in former times would have ordered her out of the room in a rage. But one day, just after Henrietta's return, he had got into a rage at some such thoughtless speech of Lizzie's, and had frightened Henrietta into one of her fainting fits. In his turn he had been frightened, and had controlled himself in her presence ever afterwards. He merely said sternly to Lizzie, "What do you mean?" and went on to Henrietta: "I am thinking of giving up my correspondence with the Meteorological Society."

"Oh, papa, why? After having belonged to it so many years, I think you would miss it if you gave it up. Couldn't I help you, papa?"

"What should you know about it?"

"Oh, but I do; just a little. Jack likes all those scientific things; and I have got a little barometer that—that he gave me, in my own room. And I look at it every morning and evening at eight o'clock, and he does the same. And then we compare notes."

"Oh, so that is what you write to each other about? How interesting!" said Lizzie.

This time the admiral growled, "Leave the room, miss!" The next minute they heard her laughing in Julia's room overhead. "Insubordination!" Henrietta heard her father mutter, amongst other inaudible growlings. And presently, "Why do you allow such behavior? Why don't they show you the respect due to an elder sister? I believe it is your own fault!"

"I dare say it is," said Henrietta hastily, not caring to contradict and so prolong a distasteful subject. "But if they do laugh at me, they are very kind to me all the same, so I need not care." And then she cunningly plunged into matters meteorological, and asked all manner of questions about aneroids, wet bulbs, and atmospherical pressure, till she had fairly set the admiral off on his favorite hobby, and made him quite happy and oblivious for a few minutes; until he, through Henrietta's dropping her needle, suddenly remembered to whom he had been holding forth; a mere girl! A crocheting, embroidering, gossiping animal!

"Dear me, Henrietta," he said, sighing again, "what a pity it is you are not a boy!"

There was something so truly pathetic in the way he said this, that Henrietta did not feel in the least inclined to turn it into joke.

"Dear papa, I wish I were, for your sake," was all she said.

Julia sat in her room up stairs, writing a subtle little note to her cousin Herbert. He had written openly to her, complaining of her unaccountable silence—unaccountable except as denoting change in her feelings—and entreating her to be kind and explain.

"If that man does not—will not"—and she shot a glance out of window towards Vivian Court—a glance with more of hate than love in it; but the hate in it was not for the house, but for the man, who would not—"if it is so, I must e'en take Herbert, poor fool, who loves me. For marry I must, before my next birthday. So, were he fifty times a cousin, and papa fifty admirals—stop, though! I'll wait till Sir Louis has married somebody else; I won't give up hope till then. . . . He will tire me to death with his antiquarian lore; I shall hate him before the honeymoon is half over. Poor Herbert! I wish

he were rich. . . . But I can't be a poor man's wife, I can't. I must have things nice and pretty about me." Then she read her note once or twice, and sealed it. She would ride into the town to-morrow, and post it privately.

A ring was heard at the front door as she was putting it away in her desk. Peeping, she saw an old crony of her father's, Admiral Henley, and his wife, standing on the step. They were two tiresome people, not worth cultivating, and she resolved to keep out of their way. She put on her hat and went for a walk, supposing they would be gone by the time she came back. But Mrs. Henley and Mrs. Maurice had not met for a long time, and there was an unusually large budget of gossip to be delivered on both sides; and when Julia re-entered the hall, she saw, through the half-open door, Mrs. Henley, the admiral, and her mother, all standing in a row before the great orange sunset, which had been hung above the sideboard in the dining-room instead of a dingy sea-piece.

Mrs. Maurice was saying in the most emphatic manner, "Yes, I assure you she only admired it, in a casual way, you know, and he got it for her without saying a word. So kind, wasn't it?"

"Meant for something better than kind, I should say," rejoined the old gentleman, chuckling. "I hope you will send us wedding-cake, Mrs. Maurice; my wife is particularly fond of it."

"Oh dear, no, I didn't mean that. Why, it couldn't be, admiral, because you see he gave dear Henrietta a vivarium full of sea-anemones and things, and dear Henrietta is quite out of the question."

"That only makes it the more conclusive, I think," said Mrs. Henley. "I shall have to congratulate you before long, I don't doubt."

"Of course," said Mrs. Maurice quite innocently, "we never know what is going to happen in this world. But I don't think there is more than a friendly feeling on both sides. Please don't hint at such a thing, because my husband would not like it. If any thing is going on, we shall all know by-and-by."

Julia had stood at the door by which she had entered, listening to this conversation. She turned back, and went up by the servants' staircase to her own room, smiling to herself.

"Thanks, my dear mamma, for your morning's work," she said, as she watched the forms of the two visitors receding behind the trees that hid the road close to the house in summer, but were daily losing more of their leafy screen.

"Somebody used to say—Napoleon, wasn't it?—that if you wanted to make a lie history, you had only to get it believed for four-and-twenty hours. I think I begin to see the beginning of the end." And then she changed her dress, and went to the parlor where her sister generally lay, for Mrs. Vivian often came there on a private visit to Henrietta, and as she had not been near her for nearly a fortnight, it was probable that she would come in some time that day. Julia knew—through the lady's-maid, partly—that there had been a succession of company at the Court, people who had been friends of the old baronet mostly, with a sprinkling of *savans*, a class with whom Sir George had had very few dealings, and a few "nobodies," whom Sir Louis had picked up from no one knew where. Mrs. Maurice came in to repeat Mrs. Henley's gossip

for Henrietta's amusement, and did not fail to mention that she had been showing off the new picture, adding in full all the comments and all her replies thereto.

"Oh, mamma," Henrietta exclaimed, "how could you? Mrs. Henley will have it all over the neighborhood that Sir Louis is paying attention to Julia. She is just the woman to do it. What a pity you showed her the picture at all!"

Mrs. Maurice's face expressed extreme bewilderment. "But I said that he had given you a vivarium, dear, so I don't think they could say he was paying attention to one more than to the other. Besides—as I said to Mrs. Henley—nobody knows what will happen in this world. And he is very attentive, there is no denying it. He is always sending you fruit and game, and out-of-the-way books, and little messages. As I said, nobody knows."

"Oh, mamma, mamma," Henrietta laughed, "how blind you must be if you think that game and fruit and books would ever make me throw over dear old Jack. Why, mamma, can't you see that Sir Louis's attention to me only proceeds from the very fact of my being engaged to Jack?"

Mrs. Maurice reflected, and said it was very odd that had never occurred to her before, and perhaps she had better tell Mrs. Henley.

"I don't know that," said Henrietta, "but I wouldn't exhibit the picture any more, if I were you."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Maurice, "if I had but thought—I'm afraid every body has seen it now."

"Really," said Julia, with a curling lip, "I think you are making a great fuss about nothing. It may be strange for Henrietta, who has lived like a nun all her life; but as for me, I've been accustomed to a great deal of attention ever since I grew up, and I shouldn't know how to do without it. Sir Louis Vivian is not the first man by a good many who has made me a present, and I dare say he won't be the last, either. And if I worried myself about what people said, I should have grown gray by this time."

Henrietta looked pained. "Oh, Ju, I wish you wouldn't talk in that way. You ought not; if one of the children were here—"

"But neither of them are here," Julia retorted, "and they can't be listening either, for they are with Miss Brydges; so your caution is thrown away."

"Hush, I hear Sir Louis coming up the path, and he has somebody with him," said Henrietta.

Julia gave a look at herself in the mirror, and then took her station quite naturally by her sister's sofa. Presently Mrs. Maurice was called away to the drawing-room. "I suppose he is come to make a formal call," said she, as she left the room. Julia sat still, uncertain whether she would go or stay. It were better, if possible, to see him in Henrietta's parlor; for he unbent himself in her presence to a much greater extent than even in his own house, with people whom he was anxious to please. But she would not let him go without showing herself. Her sister asked if she was going to the drawing-room. "No," she said; "if he wants to see me he can come here." And Henrietta was wondering silently at the resentful tone of this speech, when Mrs. Maurice came back in a hurry.

"It's Mrs. Vivian, dear, as well as Sir Louis, and they both want to see you. They say they haven't seen you for an age."

"That has been their own fault entirely," said Julia scornfully, looking up from her embroidery.

Mrs. Vivian monopolized Henrietta for five minutes, and then let her son have his say, and turned to Julia.

"It is quite an age since I saw you, my dear; but if you only knew how I have been engaged! A house full of people, and talk, talk, talk; from morning till night. Oh, I'm so glad to get a peep at your dear sister again! Dear Mrs. Maurice, I am going to ask you to give me some tea, here in this dear little room, all cosy and snug."

Meanwhile Sir Louis was saying to Henrietta: "Miss Maurice, I have brought you two partridges, killed, I beg to observe, by my own hands, and not by proxy. I'm an awfully bad shot, as you know, but I'm improving. You should just see the admiral's face when I miss my bird. It is a mixture of pity and contempt that would altogether annihilate me, if I didn't take the ludicrous view."

"Papa thinks he has lost his day if he doesn't make a good bag, I know," said Henrietta. "I shall like the birds very much, Sir Louis, and I hope you will improve, and shoot me some more."

"Here they are," said he, fumbling at his pockets. "I wasn't going to carry them in my hand, for I knew that nobody would believe I had shot them. I told my mother so, and she was in such a rage with me. She likes to think me an omnipotent sort of fellow, you see."

"Dear Mrs. Vivian! Well, Sir Louis, I think two birds a very fair beginning. Indeed, I believe there is nothing you could not do, if you only gave yourself time."

Strange! that very thing had Estelle said to him one day, in almost the same words. Stranger still, Henrietta's face as she spoke, and especially the kind look of her eyes, reminded him vividly of Estelle. And yet Henrietta's face was faded, and Estelle's fresh and beautiful. Certain it was that there was a likeness, and that was what drew him towards Henrietta; it was like getting glimpses of his darling's ghost. He went on, looking at the face on the sofa. "You should have seen the admiral's face whenever I missed! I assure you, Miss Maurice, it had exactly the same look that your sister Lizzie's had, the first and only time I ever attempted to dance with her."

"Sir Louis, will you come for your tea, or shall I bring it to you over there?" said Julia, who thought he had talked quite long enough to Henrietta.

Sir Louis got up and went to the table, and Julia crossed over to the sofa.

"Hen, what do you think?" she said, bending over her; "Mrs. Vivian says Sir Louis has asked Dr. Vandeleur down to stay, and he is actually coming."

Henrietta's face absolutely beamed with delight.

"It is too good to be true," she said.

It could only be for a very few days, Julia went on to say, because of his patients. But what a shame it was that he should be at the Court instead of the Hall! She would talk to papa about it. Henrietta suggested that perhaps papa and dear Jack would not agree very well. Then it

was time they should learn, said Julia, and she should speak to the guy that evening.

The admiral was out taking his constitutional, Mrs. Maurice said, and Sir Louis left a message for him, that he had a new microscope coming from London, and would have much pleasure in showing it to him any evening next week.

Julia caught him for a moment while Mrs. Vivian was having last words with Henrietta.

"I want to speak to you so very particularly; it's about dear Hen. I want you to tell Dr. Vandeleur something for me. I might write to him, I suppose, but I don't feel as if I knew him in the least, although he is to be my brother-in-law. I would rather send a message through you, if you don't mind."

"You know I shall be only too glad to serve you in any way that concerns either. But I hope you are not anxious about your sister. Surely she looks better, brighter, altogether."

"Oh no, no, it is not that which makes me anxious. I can't exactly explain at this moment. How could I manage to speak to you?"

Sir Louis thought for an instant. "I have to ride into town to-morrow morning. Might I come here on my way back?"

"There would be mamma, or somebody. I can't talk over Hen's affairs in public."

"Ride with me, then."

She hesitated a moment. "I might; part of the way, at least. I shouldn't care to ride through the streets on our rough pony, just to show off your splendid bay! Papa has sold my horse, you know, and he's so cruel, he won't buy me another yet."

She had found this little fact of great use already; and no longer bore her father malice for the loss of the animal, although he had been somewhat of a pet.

"You shall have my aunt's horse," he said. "He is in capital order. The Duchess of—some ladies, that is, have been riding him constantly this last fortnight."

This was exactly what she wanted. But she drew back. "You may want him for somebody else: I would rather not—thanks. No, I'll go a mile with you on the old pony."

"Nonsense! Other people have had their turn, and now you shall have yours. They say he is a capital one to go. I shall be here to-morrow at half-past eleven."

Mrs. Vivian, who had been whispering to Henrietta about Dr. Vandeleur, now became aware that Miss Julia and her son were having a very confidential *tête-à-tête*; and hurried him away, saying that they had made quite a visitation, and that dear Henrietta would be tired.

Julia's face was dark, when, next morning, she descended from her room dressed for her ride with more than her usual care, at the sound of the horses' feet within the shrubbery. She had a twofold game to play that morning. The idea of getting Dr. Vandeleur down as a visitor had flashed suddenly on her the day before. To-day she felt how more than ever desirable it was; for her father had said in his odd, abrupt way, on leaving the breakfast table: "Have the spare-room got ready; Herbert may come in any day." And as she knew that "any day" in her father's phraseology might mean either within a week or a month, it was important too to bring matters to a crisis if possible between herself and Sir Louis.

Supposing Dr. Vandeleur could not or would not come to them, she knew that the only way of disposing of Herbert quietly would be by pleading an engagement. But she preferred that he should stay away altogether. She had enough on her mind, she thought, without the twinges that the sight of him would give her torpid conscience. So she smoothed her face into as much serenity as she could, and, as they rode along, unfolded her plan to Sir Louis as if it were Henrietta's; touching playfully on the necessity of managing her dear papa's odd little fancies, and on the long trouble of her sister's youth. Sir Louis did not say how unnatural he thought it that any management should be required in the case, but he knew Vandeleur too well to suppose that he would invite himself to a house where there would be no real welcome from its head—even for Henrietta's sake. He said:

"I don't think *my* speaking to Vandeleur would be the slightest use. When he comes down, Miss Maurice can talk him over. I'll give him up to her without grumbling, I promise you, although I have been expecting his visit most eagerly. As it is, I dare say he would desert me the best part of the day, and only do me the honor to sleep at the Court."

But Julia wanted the spare-room occupied. "I know Hen would never ask, for fear of being refused. Although she is so good, she is terribly proud."

"Then why don't you ask him? You will be his sister-in-law," said straightforward Sir Louis.

"Yes, I suppose. But I don't know him; no, not half as well as I know you. Now how could I say to him, 'Dr. Vandeleur, my sister wishes you very much to come and stay at our house. I know you ought to have been invited, but papa is—well—odd; and won't do it, and mamma will never think of suggesting it to him. But if you write and say you are coming down, papa will be obliged to say that he will be glad to see you,'—and so he will when the first awkwardness has passed off—but how could I say this to a person who is a mere stranger?"

"Think for one moment, and you will see that I could as little say with propriety to Vandeleur any thing implying a want of hospitality on the part of your father. I think the best plan would be for Miss Maurice to come and stay with my mother for a little while. That will make things pleasant for every body, will it not?"

"You are too kind," Julia murmured, keeping down her anger at the failure of her plan, yet not so entirely but that her voice shook. Was there no other way? she thought again and again, as they continued their ride in silence. Henrietta would accept the invitation but too eagerly, and instead of one there would be two spare bedrooms. Had the children all had the measles? Or was there such a thing as scarlet-fever going about—whooping-cough they were too old for; was there any thing that could be magnified into an epidemic? She resolved that if all failed, she would sham illness herself, and be lodged in the spare-room, because it was larger than her own. Yes, that would she do, unless Sir Louis himself rendered it needless. Pending this cogitation, they rode through the town and dismounted at the hotel. Right glad was Julia to see and bow to a party of men lounging about the entrance; partners and admirers all of them. Sir Louis

promised to be ready at three o'clock, and then they separated, he to find out the whereabouts of an Australian mummy reported to be for sale; she to pay visits, hear the news, and give her dressmaker an instalment of her long-running account, preparatory to the ordering of fresh dresses.

She had no small number of hints and innuendoes to parry during her round of calls, all proceeding from the fact of her having been seen riding with Sir Louis Vivian, and on a horse which had belonged to Lady Caroline. Other ladies, visitors at the Court, had done the same, but never *tête-à-tête*, the gossips averred. To a woman of Henrietta's reserved temperament, such innuendoes would have given deep annoyance. But Julia played cleverly with them, so that people believed that the marriage was to be, without her having had once to commit herself by saying in so many words, "Yes, I am going to be married."

At two o'clock she went to Miss Warren's, the chief cook and confectioner of the place, to wait for Sir Louis. It was the fashionable hour for people who liked frangipane and hot patties, and the shop was full, as she had hoped it would be. She ordered a cup of chocolate, and sat in the room behind the shop while she drank it, so that the baronet might be forced to inquire for her of Miss Warren. Then she asked for pen and ink, opened her letter to Herbert, and added the words, "We are expecting Dr. Vandeleur, Henrietta's intended, to make a short stay down here. I am so sorry you can not meet; he is a very clever London physician, and you would have taken no harm by consulting him for your ague. But, unfortunately, this house is small, and we can not manage more than one spare room." As she was replacing the sheet in a fresh envelope, she heard Sir Louis's voice inquiring for her. The assistant replied, and he sat down, saying he was in no hurry. From behind the muslin curtain she saw a distant neighbor, a country gentleman named Stratton, enter with two chubby boys, supply each with buns, and turn to speak to Sir Louis. First, about a case which had come before him on the bench (for increasing deafness had not yet been considered an impediment to the performance of magisterial duties—at least down West). He had a great deal to say about this case, which he had thought proper to send to the Exeter Assizes, but which Sir Louis would have disposed of at once. Mr. Stratton, however, owing to his infirmity, imagined that the baronet entirely agreed with him, and felt that he had done an exceedingly wise thing. Then, proceeding to lighter matters, he said, alluding to the mummy—"I saw the bidding likely to run high. You were too eager; if I could have got near I would have dropped you a hint. It wasn't worth the money."

"But I wanted the thing," said Sir Louis.

"Wanted the tin!" exclaimed Mr. Stratton, in pure amazement.

"I wished to have it particularly. I wish to add it to the collection at the Court. It will be a fine contrast to the Egyptian mummy."

"Wretched mother!" Mr. Stratton whispered to himself. If Mrs. Vivian was wretched, how in the name of fortune was a dried-up Australian native to put her into good spirits?

Seeing his look of bewilderment, Sir Louis roared out benevolently: "It is to be added to

the Court collection—the Mu-se-um—though what—" he continued in a more rapid and lower key—"on earth could have possessed any body to call that ill-arranged conglomeration of odds and ends a museum, it would be hard to say. I have written," he continued, again raising his voice, "to London for a person who understands these things, to come down to the Court and set all the rubbish in order. I hope by-and-by you will see a great change for the better. At present it is more like a lumber-room than a museum."

Mr. Stratton caught so much of the baronet's speech as to make out that a competent person was coming from London, and that all the rubbish was to be consigned to the lumber-room, preparatory to a great change in the house.

"Oh! ah! yes. I'll be bound he won't find much rubbish, though. Your aunt didn't like rubbish about her. Well, well, 'tis a change indeed. I congratulate you on making it. What does Mrs. Vivian say? Will she remain at the Court?"

All the neighborhood wanted to know that; for that Sir Louis was going to marry one of the Maurices had long been settled.

"Why on earth should she not? Her rooms are all on the south side; she need not go near the museum till it is in perfect order." Which Mr. Stratton translated freely into the following: "That Mrs. Vivian cared no more than the Mewstone as long as the place was kept in proper order, and she was allowed to retain her rooms on the south side."

Wishing to put a stop to Mr. Stratton's interrogatories, Sir Louis walked to the opposite counter, and spoke again to the confectioner, who bustled to the back of the shop and told her assistant to tell Miss Maurice Sir Louis Vivian was waiting for her.

"And when are all these alterations to take place?" Mr. Stratton inquired with an affectation of extreme mystery, as Julia appeared at the door of the private dining-room.

"Why, immediately; at least as soon as I can get a competent person from London."

"In May? Oh, ah!" and Mr. Stratton walked up to Julia, shook hands with her warmly, and insisted on crossing the road to the hotel with them, to put her on her horse.

"I ain't a bit surprised, my dear, not a bit; my wife saw it coming—oh, long ago. I'm glad of it. I'm uncommonly glad to see one of you settled; so many daughters, and that sort of thing, you know. Excuse me," he went on, as he examined stirrup and girth—"excuse me, my dear. I'm a plain man, and knew your father, bless me, when he was a young spark of nineteen; little he thought then that he would be an admiral, and father to such a handsome daughter as you."

Julia prudently answered all this by a smile and nod, and rode off, well pleased with her morning's work, and particularly with Mr. Stratton's congratulation, which might help the thing to become true, she thought. There was enough in the paragraph she had added to Herbert's letter to keep him away a while longer; and even a day might make a great difference now. So she smiled brightly on Sir Louis, who, however, only spoke once during this long ride, and that was to tell her to bring her sisters to the Court soon, and show them the new mummy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT THE SPIDER SAYS TO THE FLY.

JULIA took her sister to the Court before many days had passed, ostensibly to see the mummy, really to gain another chat if possible with the Baronet. But Mrs. Vivian did the honors of the mummy, and in answer to a blunt question from Clara, informed them that her son was looking after his mining property in Cornwall. Dr. Vandeleur came down shortly after, so that Sir Louis's return might be inferred, but every thing seemed to militate against his coming to Wembury. Dr. Vandeleur was unable to remain even the week he had promised, and Henrietta, invited by Mrs. Vivian for that week, was easily persuaded to stay a while longer, so that there was no need of inquiry after her health from the inhabitants of the Court; and whenever the girls went to see their sister, it was obvious enough that Mrs. Vivian intended to keep them quite out of her son's way. Captain Waldron had not made his appearance as yet, but the admiral still chose to speak of his arrival as imminent, and mysteriously referred the delay to private affairs; which, translated by Lizzie to mean that he was looking out for a wife, was an additional cause of torment to Julia. And so the winter set in most inauspiciously. She began to lose her brilliant color; began to find herself less the object of universal notice. People said she was fading, and would have to give place to the pretty younger sister, and turn into a wall-flower. Some such remarks she heard, couched in no tones of regret, but the contrary; for many and many a time had she presumed on her good looks to spoil the game of an incipient wall-flower, or of a shy new plain girl; and these and their mothers and sisters remembered these things against her, and took their revenge.

She scrutinized her face in her glass, and was forced to admit, shuddering, that it was true. Her cheeks were fading, her eyes were becoming languid, her very eyebrows were losing their pure arch, and men were beginning to extol Lizzie's! The minx, who ought to be in the schoolroom learning German verbs was actually supplanting her with her tricks of dimple and drooped eyelashes! And now she began in despair to make acquaintance with superfine rouge and pearl white, not to mention certain villainous preparations which give fictitious lustre to the eyes. Thus tinted, she again asserted her supremacy for a time; yet with sinking heart, haunted ever by the fear of her fraud being found out, and bringing her into worse contempt; for she knew how she had used her world, and was too wise to expect quarter.

All this time Mrs. Vivian was building up an air-castle, in which a certain Lady Florence figured as *châtelaine*. This Lady Florence was the youngest daughter of a distant relative of the late Lady Caroline, who, on the strength of the connection, had invited herself to Vivian Court for a week during the autumn, and had patronized Mrs. Vivian rather extensively. With the patronage, however, there was mingled a certain judicious amount of flattery on the subject of that only son, whose virtues Mrs. Vivian daily extolled to all and sundry. The dowager duchess had this one daughter, still hanging on her hands in the most unaccountable and disgraceful way.

This daughter was not in the first bloom of youth, neither was Sir Louis. She was plain; so was he. She was quiet and studious; so was he. *Ergo*, they were made for each other: and the two mothers bent their efforts to bring about the match. Mrs. Vivian, truly, thought herself the most magnanimous party in the tacit treaty of alliance. "I dare say I shan't see much of him when he's married, dear fellow," she was wont to say to herself. "She naturally will like to have her own grand relations about her, and I shall be in the way. But a duke's daughter has a right to be high; and it will be a good connection for him. I can go back to Dorking, and he can come and see me now and then; and I know he will let me have a hundred a year to help my own little income."

Some such thoughts as these were passing through her mind, as she sat in the morning-room before her writing-table, answering a friendly note from the dowager duchess, inviting her and her son to spend Christmas-week with them in the north, and giving a faithful bulletin of her grace's nervous headaches, and Lady Florence's studies. "Who would have thought," said Mrs. Vivian to herself, as she sealed and carefully directed the envelope, "that I should ever come to be in correspondence with a duchess, or that my dear Louis might be a duke's brother-in-law for the asking?" And she turned to Henrietta, who was lying near the fire reading the paper, and remarked that the ways of Providence were very mysterious; to which Henrietta assented briefly, not seeing what gave rise just then to the utterance of the sentiment, but supposing that her hostess meant it merely as an interjectional remark by way of redeeming the time.

"Yes," Mrs. Vivian said: and then she began considering how she should best give Henrietta some inkling of what was uppermost in her mind, without exactly having the air of talking over Louis's affairs with a third person, or without appearing to say, what nevertheless she wished to have understood, "My son's wife must rank higher than a retired admiral's daughter." While she stood by the fire pondering over and weighing her words, visitors were announced, and she had to go to the drawing-room to receive them. When she returned, it was with a cloud on her usually cheery face, and Sir Louis unwittingly made it a blacker one, by remarking to Henrietta at luncheon that it was a fine day, and that, if either of her sisters happened to come up, he should be happy to ride with her in the afternoon. Mrs. Vivian looked daggers during this civil speech, and Henrietta, conscious that something was wrong, felt nervous and uncomfortable, and heartily wished herself at home.

It was not till late in the afternoon, when there was no chance of either of the girls dropping in, that Mrs. Vivian bethought herself of having given the rein to her carnal temper. Then she strove to make amends by petting Henrietta more than usual, and speaking of Dr. Vandeleur. From Henrietta's dear Jack to her dear Louis was but one step, and gradually her matrimonial plans for him became unfolded, and the cause of that day's annoyance.

"My dear, it was Mrs. Henley who put me out so. It was wrong of me, I confess; but really, knowing as I do what a match Louis is likely to

make, it was most trying to hear her nonsense. Now you know, my dear, that my son is not a man to do any thing precipitately; and I believe that he and Lady Florence perfectly understand each other. And so you may just imagine what I felt when Mrs. Henley actually congratulated me on his approaching marriage with your sister Julia!"

Henrietta blushed deeply. "I am sure," she said, in a tone of much annoyance, "that no one would feel more hurt, more distressed, than my sister, if she knew this. She would never come near this house again. How on earth could such—" "a report have arisen," she was going to say, but stopped, remembering suddenly her mother's silly remarks to Mrs. Henley, as well as the comments of the latter respecting the picture in the dining-room.

"I am sure I can not tell," Mrs. Vivian went on. "It was not you, or I, who set the report going. I only know she told me every body considered it a settled thing, and that they were going up the Nile for the honeymoon!"

"I do wish people would mind their own business!" Henrietta exclaimed, very angry, and resolved to return home the next day, and never come to stay at Vivian Court till Sir Louis was married.

"I wish they would. I assure you, my dear, I am annoyed almost as much on your sister's account as on my son's. It might be highly injurious to her. I told Mrs. Henley that there was not the slightest foundation for the report, and begged her to contradict it most positively."

Henrietta was out of patience. "My sister will never forgive Mrs. Henley this—at least I should not, in her place. Mrs. Vivian, I don't feel as if I could stay here any longer. You must let me go home to-morrow, please, and we must see a little less of each other for a time. People will have something else to talk about by-and-by."

No, Mrs. Vivian said: she did not wish that. Henrietta's companionship was a pleasure and a comfort to her.

"Thank you," said Henrietta; "but for Julia's sake I ought to go home now. I can't bear the idea of her name being bandied about the neighborhood. People will be saying next that—that she has been jilted."

"Oh, my dear child, I hope not. They shan't, if I can prevent it." But she did not press Henrietta to prolong her visit; feeling instinctively what Louis's horror would be, should such a report come to his ears. She was, on the contrary, glad that Henrietta's visit had been thus of her own free-will curtailed, and there was no word said about repeating it.

Henrietta found things in a very uncomfortable state when she returned to Wembury. The admiral was unusually cross; her mother was laid up with influenza, Miss Bridges was complaining of various violations of school-room rules, and Lizzie and Julia were enjoying a fit of sulks, each in her own room. The admiral was the easiest pacified. He had been suffering for the want of companionship during Henrietta's absence; and although it was his own fault—for he had sent both wife and daughters to Coventry for some imagined want of subordination in household affairs—he still felt it very severely. Herbert was still coming, he said; but the truth was, the young

man was waiting for a signal from Julia that the impending visit of Dr. Vandeleur was over. And Julia, as it may be supposed, was in no hurry to give him any such signal.

One blowy, rainy afternoon, Julia and her sister were preparing themselves for a long drive to Mrs. Stratton's, where they were to dine and spend the night, when the clanging of the door-bell and the barking of all the dogs told of an unusual arrival. Presently after, Emily rushed into Julia's room, followed by Clara, both announcing that Cousin Herbert was come.

"And oh, he does look so ill!" said one.

"And so handsome!" said the other; "such eyes!"

Julia set her teeth. Only the day before, Henrietta had told her the reason of her cutting short her visit to Mrs. Vivian. She had not intended to mention it, she said, but she had no choice; for without a good reason to the contrary, nothing would prevent the girls from taking walks in the Vivian grounds, and entering the museum at all times and seasons, as Sir Louis had once asked them to do. Mrs. Vivian, Julia knew, had not been near Henrietta since the latter's return. And now Herbert was come, and could not be put off any longer by lies and subterfuges. Julia knew well enough that he would have a "yes" or "no" from her before he had been in the house very long, unless she kept to her own room, which would be tiresome and inconvenient. She felt that a crisis of some sort was at hand, too, with respect to the baronet. Marry this Lady Florence he should not if she could prevent it; yet how to prevent it she knew less than ever. She did not come down till the last moment, when her father's voice resounded through the house, declaring that if she were not ready he must leave her behind. Her heart beat with fear lest Herbert should meet her on her way down, and she hurried past the drawing-room door like a culprit, and felt relieved when they had actually driven off, and the meeting was inevitably postponed till the next day. Her father beguiled the way by grumbling at Herbert for coming on a day when they were engaged out: and when she roused herself from her own thoughts to observe that it did not matter, she was only growled at for her pains, and reproved for want of cousinly feeling.

Mrs. Stratton, a fat, motherly woman, who, having no daughters of her own, could afford to be fond of the handsome daughters of Admiral Maurice, was waiting to receive them up stairs; and sending the lady's-maid about her business, began, in a tearful, hysterical voice:

"Oh, my dear Miss Maurice, I did it for the very best, but you'll never forgive me! Only, my dear, it can't be helped now, and if you would be so good as to come down—Mr. Stratton can't bear to see a gap at table, or else I wouldn't press it—but I'll see that you don't come in contact."

"I don't understand you in the least, Mrs. Stratton," said Julia, drawing herself up to her full height. "With whom am I not to come in contact?"

"Oh, my dear, I don't want to mention names. I was so shocked, indeed I was, to hear that it was all off, when Sir Louis himself had said it was to be immediately. And my husband was pleased, naturally; and told every body about it. And we thought it would be pleasant for you to

meet; and I got a beau for Miss Lizzie, too. Oh, dear, dear! I wouldn't have had this happen in my house for something. And my husband is so put out! Indeed, my dear, we both feel very much for you."

"Thank you," said Julia, ironically, but with a parched throat and violent beating of the heart.

"Oh, my dear!" and Mrs. Stratton rushed to the bell and rang for wine and sal-volatile.

"I don't want any thing, thank you. It was not remarkably pleasant to hear what you had to tell me, but I don't see why I should care, after all, as there is not a particle of truth in it."

Lizzie, who had kept silent, save an interjection or two, till now, exclaimed in corroboration: "No, indeed, and why should she care? I wouldn't. It's only people's spite;" and then looked at her sister for a glance of approval. But Julia had something else to think of.

"It is not true," she began, deliberately, "and yet I do not wonder very much at people's talking so. But it will all come right before long. I don't know whether to be glad or sorry to have to meet him to-day. It may be fortunate. Shall we go down, Mrs. Stratton?"

"I see, my dear," said the good woman, kissing her; "only a misunderstanding. I'll give my husband a hint; he'll be so glad, you don't know. And try to make it up, my dear; do. I'll manage that you shall have the little room behind the billiard-room to yourselves this evening; nobody ever goes there."

"You dear, kind soul," murmured Julia, giving her a butterfly kiss as they passed out of the room; she feeling that the last card in her game was to be played that evening, and steadily refusing to contemplate failure; Mrs. Stratton all eagerness to tell her husband that things were not so bad, after all.

Nevertheless, it was a trial to Julia's highly-wrought nerves to encounter Mrs. Vivian; to be told, in a patronizing tone, that she was looking very nice, and to be tapped on the shoulder by that lady's bespangled fan. A few months ago, she would have patronized Mrs. Vivian: but the widow had been taking lessons from the dowager duchess in the art of making people feel their proper position, and, her wits being sharpened through love for her son, she had arrived at a very fair proficiency. She had set up an eye-glass, too; a double eye-glass, in a magnificent gold setting, which she wore dangling from a chain at her belt, also *à la duchesse*. And through this she was enabled to keep a sharp watch on the Miss Maurices' behavior all dinner-time, to their extreme annoyance, and to the discomfiture of Lizzie in particular. For Lizzie had undertaken a flirtation with a young man whom every body knew to be engaged, and was progressing splendidly, when she caught the terrible eye-glass turned full on her. Once inspected and brought to confusion, Mrs. Vivian let Lizzie alone, and turned to observe Julia, who was really doing nothing except eat her dinner, but who was filled with impotent rage at being thus looked over.

"Come away from that end of the room," she whispered to Lizzie, as they re-entered the drawing room in the wake of the matrons of the party. "Lizzie, I think I would give a year of my life to pay back that Irishwoman's impertinence."

And then they amused themselves indifferently well with annuals and photographs, and sips of

coffee, and listened with secret yawnings to the scraps of nursery information with which Mrs. Stratton regaled them from time to time. Then the door opened and Sir Louis came in, and groped his way through an archipelago of small tables and tapestry chairs towards Mrs. Stratton, who graciously made place for him beside her.

"Metal more attractive here, eh, Sir Louis?"

Sir Louis bowed. "I left the gentlemen very busy talking about mangel-wurzel, and so forth. I suppose the subject is an interesting one to those who understand it. I don't."

Then Mrs. Stratton got up to look after her other guests, but came back presently; and seeing that Julia remained silent, while Lizzie was doing all the conversation, benevolently observed:

"You seem rather dull, good folks. Don't you think a game of billiards would enliven you?"

Sir Louis rose and offered his arm. "Are we to have the pleasure of your company?"

"Well, I never did! That doesn't look like making it up," thought Mrs. Stratton. "No, thank you, I'm not clever at billiards; but Miss Maurice is, and I dare say a game would amuse her."

"It looks as if there had been something desperate, my dear," she whispered to Lizzie, as the two marched out together.

Lizzie was learning not to waste her ammunition: *i. e.*, not to lie verbally when a sign might serve the purpose. She merely sighed and shook her head.

"Is Mrs. Vivian at the bottom of it, my dear? I ask because I see you haven't done more than speak to each other, and I had imagined you were all so intimate."

Lizzie hesitated. "Mrs. Vivian is Henrietta's particular friend. She has always been very kind to Henrietta, and—she's dotingly fond of *him*, you know."

"Oh, ah, I see. Jealous. Well, I'm sure I think she might be thankful to get such a sweet daughter-in-law, and one that will do the honors so well. Ah, my dear, men think a good deal of the figure the wife will make at the head of the dinner-table." And then, good-natured Mrs. Stratton, seeing some of the younger men approaching, walked off, that she might not spoil Lizzie's amusement.

"Those girls do flirt," she would say, when the matrons of her acquaintance shook their heads at the two handsome Miss Maurices' behavior. "They do flirt, and I am not going to attempt to deny it. But if I were as young and as handsome, and as much noticed in society, I think I should do exactly the same. So I won't join in your abuse of them, my dear." From which last speech the said matrons concluded that in spite of Mrs. Stratton's well-known devotion to her deaf husband and her unruly boys, her morals were at a very low ebb, and that it was providential she had no daughters.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLY WALKS IN UNAWARES.

"WHAT shall it be? *Sans égal* is a very good game for two players," said Sir Louis, taking down the cues from the rack.

"I don't care what it is," she said, taking the cue he handed to her. She was an excellent billiard-player, and at another time she might have amused herself at the baronet's blunders. But now she knew she must keep her energies for another game.

Sir Louis knew that he played badly, but he knew also that he was improving every day; that he might soon come to beat most lady-players, if he chose, from the simple fact of his trusting nothing to chance—of always giving a reason to himself for every stroke of his cue—whether he were playing, or simply practising alone. He was surprised to find that Julia made no way against him this time—surprised and ever so slightly vexed, for even so frivolous a thing as a game of billiards—as he held it—was worth playing well, if played at all.

"You are not playing well to-night," he said at last. "Take care or I shall beat you hollow."

She laughed. "Luck is against me, I suppose. Never mind."

"Another foul stroke! Don't you know, Miss Maurice, that the angle of reflection is the reverse of the angle of incidence? That is just the *pons asinorum* of the billiard-player."

"Of course I know it! I believe I am not in the mood to-night; a child might beat me. Do you know," she continued hurriedly, "I have heard three strange reports about you since—since yesterday—and all three contradicting each other. This neighborhood is greatly interested in your proceedings, Sir Louis."

"Much obliged to it," said he, with unfeigned nonchalance.

"There was something said about me—me—too," she continued. "When I saw you here to-night, I thought, what a bold man you must be!"

"You are speaking riddles," said he, still showing but little anxiety for the solving of them by tone or manner.

"Shall I tell you?" she went on, playing her ball.

"If you please."

"It was this." She drew herself away quite to the other side of the table, and looked him full in the face. "That you were engaged to me. That we were to be married immediately, you said, and go up the Nile."

He threw down his cue with an exclamation.

"That is not all. The worst—or the best you may think—is to come. My friends have been all condoling with me for your ill-behavior in—in—what did they call it—jilting me! *Me!*"

Sir Louis began pacing the room in great perturbation. "Miss Maurice! Miss Julia! I am distressed beyond measure. I am completely bewildered at this—this most unjustifiable report. Jilt! I declare I would as soon be accused of forgery. I hold in abhorrence the wanton playing with the affections that the word implies."

"You men," she went on, speaking very low, "you men have a remedy. You can shoot or horsewhip the man who dares traduce your character. But we women!—we can but asseverate, put a bold face on the matter. And when that's done, people say, 'Ah, poor dear thing! See how bravely she keeps it up!' But they believe that she *was* jilted, for all that. They are talking it over now, I dare say, in the drawing-room.

This is what I have had to bear to-day, Sir Louis. And I think for both our sakes—for mine especially—that there had best be a cessation of our friendly intercourse until—until my third piece of news comes true. For, say they, you have jilted me—" she saw how he winced at the word, and laid an emphasis on it accordingly—"in order to marry a Lady Clara, or Lady Laura somebody. Allow me to congratulate you!" And she made him a deep mocking courtesy, still keeping her eyes on his face. She did not want rouge now, nor belladonna either, and she knew it."

"It is false!" he cried, angrily—"utterly false! Who has dared say so? Who has dared slander me thus—and you? If I knew of any man—"

"False! Did you say it was false?" she whispered, leaning over the table, and hiding her face in her hands. "False! Say it again."

"Utterly, completely false!" said he taking his stand close beside her with an unaccountable impulse. She remained silent a moment. Then, with her face still hidden in her hands: "Forgive me for making you say what I had no right to know—no right either to know or care for. But—but—one can not always be brave. It will come to pass some time, no doubt. Till then, ah, forgive me! May I see you sometimes just as usual? I fancied you avoided me of late. I had no right to your society, I knew, and never asked it. But—but—for so long now has it been the only thing that made my life worth having, that—that I can not give it up till I must. Ah, what am I saying? No, no, no, I did not mean that. Have pity on me, Sir Louis, and leave me! Go away somewhere, anywhere, so that you do not cross my path. You are your own master. But I—I am but one daughter in a family. How can I leave my home, and my home duties, and roam abroad, that people may not say of me—what they are daring to say!—that *I am pining away because of you!* Will you not go, in pity?" she cried, with a voice choking in sobs.

He took her hand. "And have *you* thought it worth while to love *me*? Poor child!" He bent down and stroked her hand pitiingly, just as if she were a child that had bruised itself in falling. She felt his breath stir her hair as he sighed.

"Worth while?" she repeated, raising herself till their faces almost touched. There was a moment's pause. . . .

"Poor child!" he said again very sadly, half to himself.

"I will not be scorned!" she cried proudly, turning away from him.

"Scorned! I scorn you! Heaven forbid! I would study how to thank you for—for what I had never thought to win. Let me learn to love you, Julia."

* * * * *

They were sitting side by side, amicably enough, Mrs. Stratton thought, when she by-and-by entered, half out of curiosity, half to tell Sir Louis that Mrs. Vivian was anxious to get home before the moon went down.

"So you *have* brought him to the point at last!" exclaimed the admiring Lizzie, as she helped her sister to disrobe herself that night. "What a diplomatist you would make, Ju!"

It was a great relief to Julia to hear, on return-

ing home next day, that Herbert was laid up in an ague-fit. The admiral betook himself to the invalid's room, and staid there till dinner-time. Julia took some trouble to find out how long the fit was going to last, but her father, according to his usual provoking, mysterious habit, did not choose to supply the information, only said he should not hear of his leaving Wembury for the winter; which news she had to digest as best she could.

It would never do, she thought, for things not to be squared between them before Sir Louis came openly as her future husband. Herbert's temper was never of the best, and things might be said which were better unsaid. Yet she tore up sheet after sheet before she could write a letter to her mind—something decided, yet not too cruel. Just as she thought she had hit on a right beginning, she was summoned to attend her father in his study. It was a small chamber fitted up with shelves, and full of barometers, maps, globes, and nautical instruments—the chamber of horrors, the girls called it, since they never entered it except on command, and generally to receive a reprimand extraordinary for some violation of discipline. The admiral, however, was in a wonderfully good humor. "I've had a letter from Sir Louis about you," he said, pushing his spectacles up to his forehead; "a very nice letter, if 'twere not written in such a confoundedly small hand. And here's one that I'm to give to you, if I see fit. I call that open and aboveboard."

"I suppose I may open it," said she, taking the letter daintily.

"Of course, unless you wish it returned."

In which gracious manner the admiral signified his consent; and then for the second time ran through the contents of his letter, wherein the baronet had set forth his worldly circumstances and his intentions as to settlements and so forth, as frankly and lucidly as a father could wish.

"Then you consent?" she said, when she had read hers. She did not half like it. There was much more about his mother's comfort and happiness in it than about his or hers. What was his mother to her but a tiresome, stiff, sanctimonious old Irishwoman, to be put aside at the first opportunity?

"You womenkind can't bear any thing like a practical statement," said her father; "but for once just take the trouble to glance over this page, where you'll find every thing relating to money matters set down in the most straightforward manner. He means to make you comfortable, you will see."

She looked through the page with but half-concealed eagerness, and murmured that she thought she understood. That matter-of-fact statement was more interesting, truly, than his letter to her.

"Then I suppose it's all settled," said the admiral. Then he kissed her, and murmured something huskily which sounded like a blessing; and she escaped to her room to write that letter which brooked no further delay, leaving him wiping his eyes and his spectacles, and thinking she was his favorite after all, and he should not know how to get on without her, in spite of Henrietta or Herbert either. But he never thought of standing in her way. He must die one of these days, and then the girls must leave Wembury for some

smaller place; and one so well married would be a comfort to think of on his death-bed. And then he got out his will, and read it over, as he did sometimes when a gloomy fit came over him.

And Julia wrote to her two lovers—to Herbert, declaring once for all that she had never loved him: to Sir Louis, begging him to bring his mother as soon as he liked. She laughed as she wrote "*your dear mother*." "I wonder how the old thing took the news?" she said aloud. "I wonder if she cried, or what? Little she thought I was going to supplant her Lady Florence! I suppose they will come, both of 'em, to-morrow, and we shall kiss, and make pretty speeches, and call each other a 'dear,' she and I. And it will be as good as a play."

It was more startling than pleasant to hear Herbert's voice on the stairs, as she stood arranging a few winter-flowers for the drawing-room table, and dressed—not rouged to-day—to receive Sir Louis and Mrs. Vivian. A minute after, he entered, and bade her good-morning, as coolly as she could have wished. She answered, fingering the flowers, and looking down, having just grace enough left to feel abashed in his presence.

"I wish," said he, sitting down on a sofa where he could get a full view of her face, "to hear from your own lips, if you have no objection, what your note gave me to understand yesterday."

"Yes," she said softly, and with eyes cast down, it was true. In fact—she was engaged. She knew she had not treated him well; youth must be her excuse. She should always feel grateful to him for his affection; and as a cousin—

He stopped her there. "You might have saved me the trouble of coming back to hear only this. That would have been more cousinly, Cousin Julia. What? Your last letter to me in India was all affection, and this note"—he drew it, all crumpled, out of his breast-pocket—"this note tells me you never loved me. In plain words, one or other is a lie."

He was clearly angry, now; and she liked him all the better for it.

"I thought it was true at one time," she said; "and then—hoped to make it truth, I did indeed. And—you know you were impetuous, Herbert, and I was afraid of you, and did not understand myself—"

"I never bullied a woman yet," he interrupted, "and was it likely I was going to practise upon you? The long and short of it is, that you've changed your mind. You've grown worldly-wise, and don't any longer see the glory of being a poor soldier's wife. You did once; but you were young then, as you say. Well! I'd have done my best to make you comfortable. And my old granny would have remembered us both—she's a kind old woman—but that's neither here nor there now." He stopped and breathed hard, setting his teeth to keep down his emotion, half anger, half sorrow. He had loved her his very best, and it was hard to be told now that she had never cared for him. Mortifying, above all things, after his telling his cronies out in India that he was going to bring his wife back. Why, he had actually inquired about the Overland route of some of the ladies who had lately joined, on Julia's account. And now to be told she had never loved him!

"You will give me back my letters," said she, hardening herself to look straight at him at last.

Had she but seen him before that dinner-party, she thought, dropping her eyes again, and trying hard to swallow the knob that would rise in her throat! Here was a man! tall, straight as a poplar, with a pair of hands fit for beauty to clasp hers, thin to transparency, and white as a piece of china. Where did the baronet get his broad, clumsy paws? Ah, from his mother the Irish-woman, no doubt. She looked up once more and caught his eyes fixed upon her, scanning her from head to foot covetously. Magnificent eyes, finer far than her own, thought she, half relenting.

But the time-piece struck, and she hardened again. "I must have my letters."

"Certainly," he rejoined. "Let us make an exchange." There was less of wounded feeling in his voice now, and more of contempt than she liked. He saw how anxious she was to have her love-letters back—how anxious to get rid of him.

"It was silly of us ever to be engaged, Herbert. We might have known—even had there been no change on either side—that papa's prejudice against cousins marrying would never give way."

He laughed. "Why, the admiral told me an hour ago that he looked upon me as a son."

She shook her head, and played with her watch-chain. There was a carriage stopping at the front door, and the bell clanging through the house. "It's no use talking," she said hurriedly. She knew it was the Vivian Court carriage.

"Shake hands, Cousin Herbert, and please don't be more angry with me than you can help."

Surely that was the door opening. They must be in the hall now. Was he staying on purpose to humble her? A minute more, and the Irish-woman's sharp eyes would be looking her through and through.

"Even *as* cousins we need not part so," said he, rising languidly. "Give me one kiss, Cousin Julia: just one, to repay me for loving you all these years."

"Take it, and go," she whispered, with her ear strained to catch the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

"By heaven, I believe you love me!" he cried, kissing her passionately. "Let us go on as we were, Julia. Throw over this engagement. I don't believe your heart is in it."

She thought for a moment that she had a heart, and that it was going to break. Here was a man who had made her only scornful, derisive speeches for the last quarter of an hour and more, but who loved her like a man. Was not this fire and fury better than yon mumbling lump of ice? She clung to him, and hid her face on his shoulder.

"Oh, Herbert, Herbert! if you had but come here a little sooner! But it's too late now. Yes, I do love you, even now, Herbert!" No, this would never do, this melting mood. The words were scarcely out of her mouth when she repented them. She broke away from him, and ran to the window.

"Why should it be too late?" said he, following her and attempting to take her hand.

But she was herself again. "Leave me," she cried, passionately; "leave me! He will be here in an instant."

His eye fell upon the carriage just turning down the drive. "Oh, I understand. Yes, I think it was the best thing you could do to throw me over.

I couldn't offer you any thing at all equal to that, you know."

"Sir Louis Vivian, Mrs. Vivian," said Wallis, throwing open the door with alacrity. Herbert vanished, with a mocking bow to his cousin.

She came from the window, and met them half-way. The baronet took her hand and put it in his mother's, saying very solemnly, "This is your daughter that is to be."

And Mrs. Vivian threw back her veil, and looked her through and through, saying, "My dear, I love every thing and every body that my son calls his own; and I will love you if you will let me." And as she said it, she felt that she disapproved of Julia Maurice more strongly than ever. As for Julia herself, she felt, as she told Lizzie afterwards, as some weighed down as if she had been at a funeral.

"But, of course, you know," rejoined Lizzie, "you'll make her know her place as soon as you're fairly married."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH THERE IS NO LOVE LOST.

SIR LOUIS had gone to his mother the morning after the dinner party, as she sat with her book in the drawing-room, and had briefly informed her of his engagement to Miss Julia Maurice. Even as he spoke the words, a pang shot through his heart at the remembrance of the time so near and yet so infinitely far away, when he had waited, counting the days, till he could tell his mother of his love for Estelle Russell, and ask that she would take her to her heart and give the tenderness and sympathy denied them by Estelle's own mother. But he put that remembrance sternly away from him. Since yesterday a new claim had arisen—strangely enough, unexpectedly enough—a claim that most men, perhaps, would have shaken off more or less rudely; but a claim that, once admitted, brought with it a very clear duty. Sir Louis, ignorant of women's ways—of their little hates, their little loves, their little trickeries—judging them all by that embodiment of his ideal, Estelle, and remembering her maidenly, shrinking delicacy, felt only the profoundest pity for Julia in her self-abandonment.

"How terribly she must have suffered before she could speak as she did!" was his thought, as he recalled the scene in the billiard-room the night before.

This was how Mrs. Vivian had taken the news: "Any one that you love will be welcome to me, my son," she said, after a pause, during which Sir Louis had twice walked the length of the drawing-room, wishing that the silence would break.

"Thank you, mother." He could not say that he loved Julia; not yet. He said, "You may be quite sure that she loves me. I am very sure of that myself, else—" and then he walked up and down again.

Mrs. Vivian bent her head over her book, and tried to read from where she had left off; a hard matter, poor woman, with the words dancing up and down the page. She could think of nothing except Julia's unsuitability and her son's rashness. He, even he, the wise man, had been led away by a pretty face. "Just as bad as King Solomon, every bit," she thought, sighing bitter-

ly. Well, this was one of the mysterious ways of Providence, and she must bow to it; and only venture to pray that, if it were not the right thing, it might yet be averted.

"I am sorry you don't like it, dear mother," said he, stopping in his walk.

"My dear, it has taken me by surprise, and that is the truth. But as long as your happiness is secured, you know, Louis, that nothing can be wanting to mine. Now you have told me of this—this engagement, I had better say what I always intended to say as soon as I knew you were going to marry. I should like to go back to Dorking to live, and—"

"Mother!" He knelt down before her, and took her hands in his. "Mother! after all that has come and gone, to talk of leaving me! No! May I never enjoy a day in this house if it ceases to shelter you!"

"Dear, I know you mean what you say; but you will find—or your bride will find—me in the way when she comes home. And—who knows?—she may be jealous of our love for each other. Nay, it is best as I said, my son."

"I will not have it!" he exclaimed. "No wife of mine shall turn my mother out. If you don't want to make me utterly miserable, you will never allude to this again."

"I will not," she said, feeling to her very heart's core that she had the chief place in his yet, in spite of the white and pink beauty at the Hall.

The duchess dowager's Christmas receptions were not enlivened by Sir Louis's presence. Mrs. Vivian had hoped much from this visit, and her mortification was extreme when she found that Julia's entreaties had won on her son to stay over Christmas at Vivian Court instead. She took care not to hint to her grace that he was engaged, but laid great stress on her own disappointment at not seeing Lady Florence. For there was no knowing what might happen yet. She had spied Julia looking daggers at the handsome soldier-cousin who seemed so completely at home at the Hall. She was sure there was an understanding of some sort between them, and she felt incensed at Louis's blindness, while at the same time she wished any thing might happen to prevent his marrying Julia.

She had heard of young ladies changing their minds at the last moment; but she was forced to confess—when she examined the magnificent Brussels veil and dress, and the white Cashmere shawl, which, at her son's request, she had ordered as a present from herself to the bride—that it was scarcely probable any woman with eyes in her head would exchange these and their accessories for the modest attire becoming the bride of a poor military man.

Meanwhile, Louis redoubled his usual kindness for her. Scarcely a day passed without his testifying in some silent way that she was not to be put aside to make way for the new-comer. He had said most plainly to Julia that his mother's home would always be at the Court. Julia had acquiesced—very sweetly and gracefully, *she* thought; but not so Mrs. Vivian. Had she had more spirit or more means she might possibly have made herself a home elsewhere; as it was, she only insisted on changing her rooms to a corner of the house where she need not interfere, either in her comings in or goings out, with the

new mistress. There was a door of communication, in case Louis wished to make her a visit; and thus they would be quite independent, and in no danger of giving annoyance on either side. Her son looked gloomy and doubtful when this arrangement was first discussed, and was only reassured by her insisting that she was consulting her own comfort entirely. But not all Julia's self-control could keep her disapprobation from showing itself in her face when the baronet told her of his mother's intention. Mrs. Vivian had chosen the room Julia liked best in all the house—the little breakfast-room, with the fernery—for her drawing-room, and Sir Louis was going to have it fitted up anew for her.

"Your mother does not like me; she wants to keep out of my way," she exclaimed hastily.

"My dear child!" he returned, taking her hand, very gravely, "I trust you will never say that again. It would give me the deepest pain to think that there were any feeling besides love and respect between you and my mother."

She was subdued for a moment by his gravity. He was really hurt by her speech, and showed it by his look and manner. It would not do, she felt, to repeat the experiment. She must waive a great deal till her one point was gained. Afterwards, let Mrs. Vivian look to it. She did not know which was most galling, the baronet's absurd devotion to his mother, which he expected her to share and understand, or his demeanor towards herself—respectful, protecting; any thing but lover-like. If he had only condescended to talk nonsense once in a way, it would have been bearable. But his conversation was crammed full of common sense in one shape or another; hard, dry, uninteresting facts—philological, geological, or otherwise. His very poetry, if poetry it could be called, was harder of digestion than brickbats. He told her that Byron was only fit for girls and boys, and brought her little books, red and green, containing poems by a man of the present day; fragments whose very titles were beyond her understanding, not to speak of the subject-matter, on which there was not the most distant glimmer of light to her mental vision. A curious way of wooing, truly, and one which made her hate and abjure all books, the books of the Vivian Court library especially; while he, when her attention flagged, would put the volume back in his pocket, saying complacently, "Ah, you will understand by-and-by."

It was the night before the wedding, and Mrs. Maurice was already in a state of incipient hysterics because she felt sure she should do something wrong, either at church or at the breakfast, and the cold pavement would certainly give her her death of rheumatism. The admiral observed that Sir Louis had had an extra stove put in, and that carpets and matting had been laid down; but she had taken up the idea of catching cold in church, and could not abandon it easily.

"You're much more likely to suffer from the heat," said her husband. "And, as for that, why, you can stay at home if you like."

Whereupon Mrs. Maurice burst into tears, and demanded what she had said or done to deserve that. She should go if she had to be carried. See the last of her dear daughter she would, if she were laid up till next spring for it. "You seem glad to get rid of her," she whimpered, "and I dare say she will be glad to go, for it

has been very dull for her, my being so laid up this winter and not able to take her about so much as usual; but she'll find out by-and-by that a mother is better than a mother-in-law when all's said and done."

"Humbbug!" ejaculated the admiral.

"Not but Mrs. Vivian has been most kind, I will say that," she went on, wiping her eyes. "It was a great save to us, you know, her giving the wedding-dress; and it is far handsomer than we could have afforded. And she has been most attentive to me, too, my dear. Only yesterday she sent me down a great bottle of liniment and a new book. It is a very nice book too, only it makes my head ache to look at the title. It is all about beasts and horns and images, and the slaying of witnesses."

At this point of his wife's chatter, the admiral, finding he had had as much as he could stand for the time, abruptly walked off to his study, and sent for Wallis, to worry him with a few more last orders touching the breakfast.

Julia's boxes stood in the hall, corded and labelled; and, having nothing more to think of now, she turned into Henrietta's parlor for a moment's rest, and a few last words. She felt bound to Henrietta; for the latter, on hearing the sum the admiral had named for the wedding outfit, had said quietly:

"That is as much as dear papa can afford, no doubt; but I should like to make it a little more. You must take my Christmas quarter's allowance, Julia."

For very shame Julia had hesitated. But Henrietta had insisted. "You are thinking about my poor people, I know. But I have some of my Michaelmas money left, and dear Jack put five pounds into my poor-box when he came down." And she pressed her gift into her sister's hand.

Julia had taken it, and paid her old dress-maker's bill, vowing to herself never, so long as she lived, to be in debt again on any pretext whatever.

"I am glad you came in," said Henrietta, "I have got a keepsake for you." She held up a book in antique binding with clasps. "It is a book that I am fond of, and that I hope you will like too, for my sake. I shall not see you alone to-morrow, so I must say what I wish now. I do hope that you may be a happy, happy wife, and that your home may be a peaceful one. I think Mrs. Vivian will be very fond of you if you will let her. She is a little peculiar, perhaps, but she is a truly pious woman, and she dotes on her son."

"I dare say we shall do well enough," said Julia; "she won't interfere, you know, as she has a suite of rooms to herself." Her private opinion thereon was not for Henrietta.

"So she said. It is best so, doubtless. Dear Julia, it must be a comfort to you to think that papa consented from the very first. No regrets, no heart-burnings in your case, as in mine. No wasted youth to mourn over, thank Heaven," said Henrietta, with a sigh.

Julia could have laughed at her sister's taking it so entirely for granted that, because she married this man, she loved him. But it was necessary to be on her guard as much with Henrietta as with Sir Louis or Mrs. Vivian. She turned the conversation adroitly on Dr. Vandeleur, who

was coming down to be at the wedding, and would return to London the evening after.

"It will be your turn, by-and-by, never fear," she said; "so don't be low-spirited, Hen." And then she talked of the wedding-trip, and the presents she intended to bring back from Rome and Naples. By-and-by, Mrs. Maurice's voice was heard in a distant passage, inquiring querulously for Julia. She rose hastily and bade her sister good-night, saying, "Don't let mamma come bothering me. I want to keep fresh for to-morrow. I shall slip round by the back stairs, so good-bye."

"Of course I know it's a goody book," she thought, as she stole up to her room in the dark. She stopped at her door, and listened to the sounds of mirth floating upward from the drawing-room. Miss Brydges was away for her holidays, and all the girls were assembled there, emancipated from the schoolroom for the time being. Lizzie's voice rose highest. There was evidently some passage of words between her and Herbert.

Julia leaned over the balustrade, and strained her ears to catch the purport of what he was saying. She knew it was no good, but she could not help herself; Herbert's voice had a sort of fascination for her. She had refused his love, but she could not bear to see his attentions constantly directed to Lizzie. She would not have minded it so much if she had been already married. But it was a refinement of cruelty on his part to act in such a manner during her engagement. She was not prepared for such cruelty, and had found it impossible to bear it with equanimity. She had expected him to be sad and subdued; thankful, even as it was, for a kind word or look from her; instead of this ostentatious flirtation with Lizzie. As for Lizzie, when taxed with want of sisterly consideration, she had replied hotly that she was only acting as Julia had suggested when first she was aware of Herbert's being in England. So she had to bear it, and it had been gall and wormwood to her.

She sighed deeply, as she turned into her room, thinking what a sorry contrast Sir Louis's figure would make to Herbert's, at church on the morrow. Sir Louis, stooping, slow, and absent; Herbert, finely proportioned, lithe, and graceful, with his magnificent blue eyes and lovely hands. The sight of some of the wedding paraphernalia soothed the rankling in some degree. The lace and fur and velvet which went to compose the travelling dress she knew must represent nearly a fourth of Herbert's income. This was certainly a soothing reflection. "I didn't know I had so much sentiment left in me," she muttered, as she folded away the bonnet and mantle into the wardrobe. "What a fool I am! The game is well worth the candle."

Henrietta's present lay on the table. She took it up, yawning, and, sitting down by the fire, began slowly to undress.

"Yes, the game is worth the candle. How nice it will look in the papers, next season, 'Lady Vivian, presented, on her marriage, by the Duchess of So-and-so.' I'll make that old woman do it, whose ugly daughter his mother wanted him to marry. Let's see this goody book."

"Just what one might expect of Hen," she soliloquized. It was a copy of Jeremy Taylor's *Golden Grove*. "Well, she might just as well

have got me a card-case, or a box of perfumes, or a jewel-stand. However, it's the proper thing to have goody books in one's room, and this will look very pretty on the table." She turned the leaves over and examined the markers, which were heavy with gold embroidery, her sister's handiwork.

She turned to the light, and began at the top of one page which Henrietta had marked with pencil. It was the *Prayer for a Maiden before Marriage*. The absurdity of Henrietta's marking that for her! she thought, as she ran her eye over the page, turning up her lip at the quaint phraseology: "Bless that dear person whom Thou hast chosen to be my husband; let his life be long and blessed, comfortable and holy, and let me also become a great blessing and comfort unto him; a sharer in all his joys, a refreshment in all his sorrows, a meet helper for him in all accidents and chances of the world. Make me amiable forever in his eyes, and very dear to him. Unite his heart to me in the dearest union of love and holiness, and mine to him in all sweetness and charity and compliance."

She rose, and threw the book from her in anger.

"What a fool that Henrietta is! And what a fool I am, to care for such old-fashioned stuff!"

The children and Lizzie were all scampering up the stairs, and Herbert's voice could be heard above their laughter calling upon Lizzie to come down. Not unless he gave her ribbon back, she answered, laughing. Julia ran to her door and bolted it, just as her sister knocked for admittance. She gave no answer, and Lizzie presently went away.

"Oh!" she thought, as she laid her face on the pillow to stifle the sobs that would rise in spite of her resolve, "if it could have been! Oh! if Herbert hadn't been so poor, or if he had but staid away, I wouldn't mind so much! If I could but sleep away to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH MADAME MAKES A PINCUSHION OF HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

RAYMOND managed to see his old father, and to look after the steward and gamekeepers and other people employed on the estate, by going down into Languedoc during his mother's yearly visit to Frohsdorf. M. de Montaigu would inquire eagerly after Estelle and the child, and declare his intention of accompanying Raymond back to Paris. But when the time came, his courage always failed him. The idea of being suddenly taken ill, and being deprived of the spiritual offices of his accustomed director, outbalanced the anticipated pleasure of embracing his daughter-in-law and his grandchild, and consequently Raymond always returned alone.

Four years glided away almost imperceptibly for Estelle—only her boy's successive birthdays marked the lapse of time. He was a lovely child, with his father's southern complexion, and his mother's liquid gray eyes; a clever, saucy, impetuous darling, adored and spoilt equally by both his parents. Estelle's letters to her mother and to M. de Montaigu were filled with his sayings and doing. Mrs. Russell's only departure from her sys-

tem of non-intervention consisted in the inquiry—made at the beginning of every winter—as to whether Estelle made him wear lamb's-wool socks. M. de Montaigu used to make the abbé read him over the passages relating to his grandson's beauty and cleverness, till he had the words almost by heart. Madame, if she happened to enter the room, would stop and listen for a moment, and then give a contemptuous sniff and walk away, saying, "I don't believe a word of it."

The summer was coming on, and Raymond was making arrangements for taking his wife to England, to visit her mother and her brother Harry, who had just returned from the coast of Africa, when they were surprised by an unexpected visit from the Abbé d'Eyrieu, who, to Estelle's still greater surprise, gave her a letter from her mother-in-law, containing an invitation to the château.

Now Madame de Montaigu might just as well have sent this letter by post. But it probably appeared to her that it would make it of more importance—give it the air of being a diplomatic missive, in short—if she confided it to the abbé.

Estelle read it, and gave it to her husband. He read it in his turn, and, passing it to the abbé, desired his candid opinion of it.

D'Eyrieu replied that without a doubt M. de Montaigu was becoming much weaker; that he had often expressed his conviction that he should not see another winter, and that his only wish was to have his family round him before he died. It was in pursuance of this earnest wish that Madame de Montaigu had overcome her own private feelings so far as to write to Madame Raymond. "She might have done it before," Raymond said, angrily.

"Undoubtedly," was the abbé's reply. "But you must be aware, M. Raymond, that your mother is one of those people who can not confess themselves ever to have been in the wrong. Such people are especially difficult to deal with; the older, the worse. However, that madame now really wishes for the presence of Madame Raymond my coming here will sufficiently testify. I am especially charged to indorse the wish expressed in her letter."

Estelle looked at her husband. He appeared to hesitate. "We have been very comfortable and happy ever since we have lived here, M. l'abbé, and I should not like to take my wife back to be annoyed in the way she was formerly. You see my mother's letter is no guaranty whatever that she won't interfere or make mischief. I shouldn't mind taking Estelle down when she was gone to Frohsdorf, but—"

"My impression is, that Monsieur le Comte may not be alive then," said d'Eyrieu.

"In that case," said Raymond, "I, at least, ought to be there now."

He was half inclined to return with the abbé, and send for his wife and child, if his father's state did not alter. Estelle endeavored to remain entirely passive; it was not for her to bias him in a matter like this. But d'Eyrieu took advantage of one moment when they were alone to say:

"Believe me, if you let your husband go down to the château without you, you will repent it."

This was very encouraging. But d'Eyrieu

was a man so incapable of lending himself to any thing underhand, that she felt sure he spoke for her advantage, not madame's. She was too proud to ask an explanation, and it did not appear from his manner that he expected her to ask any. He and Raymond had a long conversation together before he left them, and the day after his departure they set out themselves, with Lisette, Bébé, and old Jean-Marie in their train.

Madame had made a round of visits beforehand, for the especial purpose of proclaiming to her friends this great event about to take place. She had pardoned her daughter-in-law, she said, shedding tears abundantly. Her mother's heart bled still to think of the cruel manner in which she had been deprived of her son's society, but she was determined to put every thing aside, and receive him and Estelle as if they had never been any thing but friends. She invited her most intimate neighbors to be present at this grand act of reconciliation. So that when the dusty carriages containing Raymond and his wife and suite drew up before the château, on the third evening after their leaving Paris, he found, to his annoyance, a crowd of people standing at the drawing-room windows and on the terrace, and Madame de Montaigu, with Hortense Dubreuilh, in full dress, standing on the threshold to receive them.

"Ouf!" he exclaimed, when he had extricated himself from the embracings, and had got up stairs away from every body. "My mother might have delivered us from this mob, at least till to-morrow. One would think she wanted to make it a royal reception *à la Frohsdorf*. I call it running the gauntlet."

"I, too, have been embraced and blessed," said his wife, who could not help laughing in spite of her fatigue. "Madame evidently intends us to feel how naughty we have been, and hopes we shall never do so any more."

But nothing had been said of M. de Montaigu, the very person they came to see. When they had rested and made themselves fit for madame's drawing-room, they went to his room, and found him surrounded by the abbé, his valet, and old Jean-Marie, who had come to pay his respects to M. le Comte, and to show off Bébé.

Bébé, who had clung to the old servant till now, rushed to his mother, and hid his face in her dress. The comte was greatly agitated; he embraced his son and daughter-in-law, weeping and trembling. "It is for joy, for joy, my children," he cried. "I thought I should die without seeing you and your little one." He was enraptured with his grandchild's pretty behavior. He behaved better than Raymond did at that age.

Raymond laughed. "His mother has brought him up, you see," he said.

"Hey, what?" said the old gentleman. "His mother? Yes, of course. And has brought him up in all the sentiments of filial respect, as well as politeness; as I always maintained, you know," he added, turning to the abbé. He grumbled when his wife came in and said that excitement was bad for him, and that Estelle and Raymond were wanted in the drawing-room. He would have gone to see Bébé put to bed; it would have been a *fête* for him, he said. Madame begged for Raymond's arm back to the drawing-room, and Estelle could only whisper, as she took her

leave, that monsieur should be present at Bébé's going to bed to-morrow instead.

"Yes, yes; only thou must not say a word," he whispered in return, shaking his old head and pointing to the door. Just then Estelle's old acquaintance, Hortense, came up, with a repetition of madame's wish. Hortense had completely thrown off her convent breeding, and appeared to aim by her dress and manner at being considered a leader of fashion. M. Adrien was invisible, and she did not seem to miss him. Estelle did not venture to inquire after him, but Hortense herself obligingly supplied all lack of information. M. Adrien had gone to the dogs to some purpose at last, and she had separated from him, and had placed herself under Madame de Montaigu's protection. Madame was tiresome sometimes, she said, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders, but she was able to go more into society when with her than if she lived alone. "And then, you know, a woman in my position has to be so careful," she said, with another pretty shrug. As far as could be seen, she liked her position very much; so much that before the evening was over, Estelle thought she had got at the meaning of the abbé's odd speech. She felt angry with him, for the bare fact of his making it seemed to imply a doubt of Raymond. The absurdity of such a doubt was evident from Raymond's own estimation of Madame Hortense. "I wonder at my mother not keeping that affected little puss in order," he said emphatically, when Estelle spoke of her after the evening was over.

Madame de Montaigu, whose only happiness was in a crowd, had prepared such a round of dissipation for her daughter-in-law, that Estelle's Paris life, sufficiently lively for Raymond's French taste, sunk into tameness by the side of it. At the same time madame declared that her only object in giving entertainments was to prevent Estelle from feeling dull. She was sensible, she said, that after Paris, the château had indeed few attractions. Estelle in vain declared that she lived comparatively a very quiet life. Madame only opened her eyes, and looked incredulous, and Hortense laughed, and said she should come and see; which was the very last thing Estelle wished. She did not like Hortense. She was always ready to talk to any one about her husband's ill-behavior, and she made no secret of her contempt for him. Another thing which annoyed Estelle was her want of love for children. "It is as grandmamma says," she would say, when the young mother would slip away from the drawing-room to visit Bébé's nursery, "you spoil him; and you are so completely wrapped up in him that you don't care how you dress, or how you look. It is all Bébé, Bébé! You would dress him up in silver and gold, and wear sackcloth yourself with pleasure."

Hortense was never remarkable for discretion, Estelle knew, but her speech was none the less disagreeable for its preface. "It is as grandmamma says." They had been talking her over, then; and she was found wanting in Madame de Montaigu's balance, as she might have expected. It was useless to show any displeasure; she could only hope to escape storms while under madame's roof by arming herself with forbearance. She merely said, "My dear Hortense, I always dress well enough to please my husband;" an answer

at which the young lady reddened, and then laughed, and said it was quite Arcadian; and thanked Heaven she had neither husband nor child to worry her, and make her gray-headed before her time.

If the perpetual round of society could have begun and ended at the château, where she could always slip away and run up stairs to her boy, Estelle would not have cared. But invitations began to pour in from far and near, a few of which her husband wished to accept, and others, a refusal of which would have offended madame. It was impossible always to take Bébé with her, and when she came back she was sure to hear from Lisette either that his grandpapa had been giving him too many sweetmeats, or that he had got into disgrace with his grandmamma, who made a bone of contention of the pet name, Bébé, and chose to insist on calling him Henri, to which appellation he obstinately refused to answer, because his "pretty mamma" did not call him by it. Besides this, madame had taught him to say the *Ave Maria* at night, and had reviled her daughter-in-law—so Lisette expressed it, in her anger while telling it—as worse than a heathen for bringing up the child so. Estelle kept all this to herself. She scarcely saw Raymond alone now. He was much occupied with revising some poems for the press, and when he was not in the drawing-room or with his father, was sure to be in his study, or pacing up and down the avenue in a fit of abstraction which she could not venture to disturb.

Madame Fleury had taken the initiative in calling upon Estelle. She, and the Protestant circle generally, had been as much in the dark as the Catholics as to the real cause of the separation of the two households of the Montaignus. Some people were of opinion that the Protestants ought to drop her acquaintance. It was well known that she had ceased all communication with French Protestants since she and her husband had left Languedoc for Paris. It was conjectured by some that she had turned Catholic; by others that she was become an atheist like her husband. M. Cazères was of opinion she ought not to be countenanced generally. He should make her a pastoral visit, he said, but he should not allow his wife to go. However, as Estelle came to see Madame Fleury soon after her arrival, and attended the temple service the Sunday after, there was no help for it, but that madame must return her call. It was madame's favorable report of Estelle's mode of life that induced the rest to go and see. "I found her," said she to M. Cazères, "sitting with the old gentleman; M. Raymond on his knees, making to laugh the little son. She looked proud and happy, and well she might! Ah, what sweet expression is in that face of young mother! And what adorable child! It was an idol. I wept with tenderness! And she asked me about my poor people, and about Mathilde, about every body, in fine. I believe she is an angel of goodness, let people talk as they please."

It was in consequence of Madame Fleury's favorable opinion that a letter came to Estelle shortly afterwards from Mathilde, whose husband had just succeeded to a large fortune and was soliciting the place of *préfet* at Pau. "Thy husband," wrote madame to her niece, "has literary pretensions; he will do well to cultivate M. Raymond de Montaignu, who, they say, has a pretty house at Paris, and a literary circle of the most

distinguished." So, in accordance with her aunt's advice, Madame Mathilde wrote to renew her old acquaintance with Estelle, and to ask her and M. Raymond to pay them a visit at their château in the valley of Argeles. Estelle showed the letter to her husband, saying, "I suppose I may decline?"

He said, "Have you any real objection? I see none."

"But it is for a week. How are you to spare a week, Raymond? As it is, you complain of your work being disturbed."

"I know; but I never expected any thing else down here. And a week's run will do me no harm—nor you. You look worried, *mignonne*. What is it?" he asked, drawing her towards him.

"Nothing, nothing!" she replied, with her old smile. It was true, however, that she was worried; but it was useless to worry Raymond in turn with what he could not stop. It was only that ever-recurring mother-in-law's tongue. Madame had just been reading her the old lecture on her stupid fondness for her child, and her neglect of social duties.

"Yes, yes, you will remember my advice, daughter-in-law, when it is too late. You will repent yourself of your seclusion, when you find your son grown up and tired of the paternal house; when you have daughters to marry, who knows? Ah! then you will think of me! But in your position, with the fortune you have, it is too absurd. People allow themselves to make observations on your dress. Madame de Luzarches asked me whether you had given yourself up to religion—"

"Raymond never says these things to me; and if I please him it is enough," Estelle exclaimed, out of patience. All this was *à propos* of a dinner that Madame de Luzarches wished to give in the middle of August, when the heat was most intense. Estelle had simply said she hoped it would not be a large party, as the De Luzarches' dining-room was only of a moderate size. She wondered how she and her husband had managed to bear the constant interference during the first two years of their married life; and looked forward longingly to the autumn, at the close of which she would have Bébé and Raymond quite to herself again, in the pleasant house at Paris.

"It occurs to me that I might get a shot at an *izard*," said he, looking up from his writing. "De Luzarches told me of a man who had bagged two on the Vignemale this season. You could stay with your friend, or go as far as Caureters."

"How am I to manage it all?" she said. "Madame de Luzarches has engaged us for the 15th; Mathilde wants us on the 16th; she does not say a word about Bébé. Indeed, she writes that I can have her maid, so I know there is but little room for us. Lisette is a good creature, but still—to leave the boy eight whole days—"

She broke down quite. "He will be asking for 'pretty mamma,' night after night, and I not there: and suppose he were ill—it is not as at Paris, where one can get a doctor in a quarter of an hour. Oh, Raymond!"

"My love, my love," he cried, soothing her gently. He was greatly surprised and disturbed, and felt sure that she must be ill herself to give way to such gloomy fancies. He gave her eau-

de-cologne and made her lie down, and darkened the room; and then put away his papers and went to order a physician to be sent for. Jean-Marie was saved a hot gallop into Toulouse, for the doctor's cabriolet was at the door, and the doctor was closeted with Madame de Montaigu. Raymond walked up and down the court, waiting to speak to him as soon as he came out. Madame appeared at her bedroom door, and he asked her hastily when the visit would be over.

"What is the matter now?" she asked, carelessly. She had been trying on a new dress, and was going to seek Hortense for the benefit of her opinion. Raymond explained. His wife was nervous; unaccountably so; and he must have advice for her. It might be the commencement of a fever. She promised to go in and speak to M. Gardère, and Raymond went back to his wife.

Madame presently brought up M. Gardère; not before she had given him her view of the case, though. He felt Madame Raymond's pulse, coughed portentously, and ordered her an infusion of lime-flowers, an occasional glass of sugared water flavored with orange-flower water, and—as much amusement as possible.

Estelle laughed. "I don't want amusement," she said. "And I am quite well, only my husband will not think so. And I detest orange-flower water."

"A very good thing, nevertheless, and wonderfully calming for the nerves. I always take a glass before going to sleep, by Monsieur Gardère's directions," said Madame.

M. Gardère bowed. "Precisely so. Madame Raymond's nerves want calming. At the same time she must be amused. Dullness is worse than death."

Raymond and Madame followed him out of the room when he left, after recommending Estelle to sleep, if possible. She laughed to herself when they were gone: it had been such a farce all through; and she felt as sure that Madame had inspired M. Gardère as if she had heard her. She would have gone down stairs, or out into the garden, in defiance of the doctor's advice to sleep, only she was afraid of vexing Raymond.

"What was it that took me?" she thought. "I wanted not to worry him, and I went and did it. Gardère must be right about my nerves. But instead of ordering lime-flowers and orange-flower water, he should have ordered a gag for Madame, or thrown her into a mesmeric sleep for a few weeks."

But she forgot all about her nerves and her mother-in-law, when Bébé came beating at the door to be let in. She took him up in her arms and kissed him passionately. "Poor Madame," she said, aloud. "Poor woman! How should she be happy or contented, thrusting away from her that blessed child-and-mother love! Oh, my boy, you will never want to get out of your mother's way as if she were an enemy, will you?" Bébé stroked her cheeks, and kissed her, saying, "pretty mamma!"

There was a sound of scraping of chairs on the polished floor in the room below, and an opening and slamming of doors, and presently Raymond came up. M. Gardère, he, and Madame had been sitting in consultation over her.

"My love, do put down that child, I beg," was his exclamation as he entered. He did not

wait for her to obey, but took Bébé off her lap himself, with a touch of peremptoriness.

"My dear Raymond!" she said; "I like it. Why may I not have him?"

"You want taking care of," said he. "I had no idea you were in the habit of carrying that boy up and down the terrace. My mother declares you are getting crooked. I don't see that, yet; but she is particularly observant; and—well, at any rate, prevention is better than cure."

"Madame is always saying something unpleasant," Estelle began, feeling very angry.

"—I am uncommonly glad to know of this, at all events. My dearest, she only spoke to me in pure kindness. She is distressed about you. She says you are getting quite hipped, and that you won't rouse yourself. I shall take you to Argèles, most certainly. Gardère recommends change. I have been absorbed in my writing, and never imagined you wanted looking after."

"But I do not care about Argèles," she cried. "Why can't you go and shoot izzards, and leave me at home? You know Mathilde will have no room for Boy."

"Boy will do well enough here for a week," said he. "My mother will be at home, and Hortense. Oh, he will be well looked after."

"Hortense! Why, she hates children!"

Raymond pulled his mustache at this. "My dear! Come now; I don't like Hortense, but that seems a little too hard on her. Both she and my mother express themselves most kindly about the child. They will take charge of him entirely, as long as we are away. They would even now, if you would only let them. My mother complains that you are jealous of her loving the child. She says it goes to her heart to see all his caresses kept for you."

A very bitter reply rose to Estelle's lips, but she kept it down. "She is welcome to make him love her all she can," she said. "Is it not natural he should love me best? Ah, Raymond, if she had loved you as I love him, she would understand; she would not be pained." And, forgetting his prohibition, she caught her boy up in her arms again.

"Incorrigible!" Raymond said, smiling, nevertheless. "But to return to my mother. I thought, dear, when she was speaking to-day, that perhaps it was just because she was sorry for her neglect of me in my childhood, that she yearned so for our boy's love now. Dear, my heart is sore, even now, when I think of all the love I might have had, if she had been like you: of all I missed, because she was—what she was. Enough! Let us not visit her mistake on her, now she sees it. Let her have the chance of making herself beloved by an innocent child."

Estelle put out her hand. "Dear," she said, "I will go with you to Argèles and—and—grandmamma shall take care of Boy for one week."

Madame was grimly pleased when her son told her of Estelle's concession. Raymond assured her his wife wished Bébé to love her. "I am glad to hear it," she said. One week was a mere nothing, however. If they would stay at Argèles or Cauterets for six, there would be some chance of her attaching the child to herself. Raymond did not choose to commit himself so far; although, as she put it, there was Estelle's health to be benefited by the change, which was

no small consideration. One thing, however, madame resolved to accomplish in the eight days. She would do away with the absurd appellation of Bébé, and make the child answer to his proper name.

Estelle did not venture to give a hint as to the management of her boy while she was away. To do so would have raised madame's wrath too high. She had to content herself with entreating his grandfather to cease from supplying him with sweetmeats till she came back. M. le Comte promised, but five minutes after his hand was seeking the sweetmeat box in his pocket. "Just one sugar-plum," he begged, patting the child's head. "Just one. And he likes them so much." At all events, M. le Comte's indiscriminate administration of sweets was better than madame's alternate spoiling and scolding, and Hortense's teasing, of the poor little mortal, whose boisterous mirth was often turned into weeping, followed by summary banishment from the drawing-room, and reflections (not unfrequently uttered in his hearing) on his mother's bad system of bringing up.

"It was but for a week," Estelle thought, as she sat under Lisette's hands in preparation for Madame de Luzarches's dinner-party. They were to sleep that night in Toulouse, and go on to the mountains before daybreak the next day, to avoid the heat. Madame came in and looked her over from head to foot. It was a pleasure, she said, to see her in full dress; and she walked round and round, giving little touches to the lace, and criticising the shade of the silk, while Bébé sat quiet, looking very earnestly and wonderingly, with his mother's diamond bracelets hung on his arm.

"Now," whispered madame, as Estelle rose in the full splendor of diamonds and Brussels lace, "I must carry the child off, or he will be wanting to go with you, and—" She shook her head impressively.

Bébé heard, and threw himself down at his mother's feet. "I shall go with mamma," he said sturdily, catching hold of her dress. Lisette screamed, and wrung her hands. "The lace!" she cried, "that I gave myself so much pains to get up. Alas! What terrible infant! Go then, my jewel, go then. Mamma will come back quickly to thee."

Madame tried her harsh voice in blandishments. "Come with me, little darling. Grandmamma has beautiful diamonds, beautiful pictures, in her cabinet." Bébé only shook his curly head. "None so beautiful as mamma," he said, eying his grandmother saucily.

"Behold the carriage!" said Lisette. Madame was out of all patience. There she was, embracing her boy again, and crumpling all the trimming and flowers in front of her dress. Estelle, poor thing, was almost choking. She had never left him for a week before, and she was thinking, "How he will get scolded and teased, punished perhaps, when I am gone!" If she had dared, she would have taken off her diamonds and her splendid dress and staid at home. But Raymond came in to tell her the carriage was waiting; and madame made a dive at Bébé, caught him, and whisked him away. Estelle heard his cries through the closed door. "Oh," she cried, "madame never let me say good-bye to him!" And she would have gone after her boy. But

Raymond, glancing at his watch, said there was no time to lose, she could say good-bye when she came back, and he was hurrying her down stairs, when Lisette rushed before her with an exclamation of horror at the crushed state of the trimming down the front of the dress. "Alas!" she cried, while her nimble fingers effaced the marks of Bébé's embrace, "but I entreat madame to make the embracements, another time, before she is dressed."

Raymond laughed, and handed his wife down stairs. "I think grandmamma is not very far wrong when she says you spoil him;" and then he added, looking at his watch again, "I do wish, though, that you would not be late. The horses will be in a lather."

Some married women are so accustomed to be found fault with by their lords, that they pay no more attention to the marital reproof than to the buzzing of a fly. Estelle's case was different. Raymond was almost the only person who never did find fault with her. She dared not trust herself to speak. She lay back in the carriage and put her bouquet up to her face. She longed more than ever to be back in her pretty Paris abode, where she should hear no more speeches prefaced with, "*It is as grandmamma says,*" which gave them all their sting.

It must be said, in justice to Raymond, that he was unconscious of a sting being conveyed by those words, or he would not have uttered them, even in the moment of petulance caused by the fear of being late for the de Luzarches's dinner-party.

Estelle trembled inwardly when M. de Luzarches alluded to their return to the paternal house, during dinner, and congratulated himself on the acquisition to Toulousan society in the persons of Monsieur and Madame Raymond, returned to the fair plains of Languedoc, the cradle of the Montaigus.

"One does not remain in the cradle all one's life," she said.

Raymond was too far off to hear. M. de Luzarches repeated it to him, adding, "But now you are here, we shall keep you."

Raymond said, "Till October."

"Till October!" cried Madame de Luzarches, with ever so many notes of exclamation in her voice. "What new thing is this? Madame de Montaigu said there was every probability of your giving up your house in Paris, and—"

"We should never think of doing that till you had honored us by a visit," said Raymond gallantly, and turned the conversation to another channel.

"You will not surely stay down here?" Estelle said to her husband afterwards, with a view to find out if Madame de Montaigu had been throwing out hints to him. He scouted the idea. How could they hope to educate their son on right principles among a set of priest-ridden Legitimists? he asked. He wished his boy to grow up with a mind unbiassed, and judgment free from the trammels of time-honored prejudices. A prejudice might be either true or false; but it was a prejudice, and as such, an evil, as far as the judgment was concerned. Above all, he wished him not to become an anthropomorphite. Anthropomorphism was an amiable form of idolatry, no doubt, but narrowing to the intellect.

"Ah," she said, with a sigh—for she knew it

was no use to argue with her intellectual husband—"I know, dear, that you are wonderfully clever. But this Supreme Being, as you call him, is not, and never could be, my God."

Raymond smiled down on her with extreme benignity. She was intensely anthropomorphic, he said; it was the only fault he had to find with her. And yet, he thought, he would not have her otherwise.

"This God of yours," she went on, speaking out her thoughts boldly for once, for her boy's sake, "where shall I find Him? I have sat and listened for hours to you and your literary friends. I have understood a little, perhaps. Well, you talk and talk, you analyze, you generalize, and He seems to recede farther and farther off, like the rainbow the child climbed after. A very grand God—somewhere—but quite unget-at-able. Mystery, uncertainty, no love. I should say perhaps a crushing Power—"

"Just so," Raymond began.

"But no World-Father; no Father to me and you. Listen!" Her face lit up with a sudden glow of inspiration. "My Raymond, when much depressed, or much elated, as we foolish women are sometimes—perhaps without great cause for either—He draws wonderfully nigh. He envelops us with his presence, if I dare so to speak; and our poor souls commune with Him, and are rested and refreshed in some mysterious way, just for a little space."

"Sweet enthusiastic little wife! If it were but true!" But he dismissed that if. "It would be unphilosophical," he said, "to deny any phenomena because in the actual state of our knowledge they are inexplicable. But you will allow that the influence of imagination in woman is proverbial."

That was true, she knew; and again she drooped under the old feeling of incapacity and ignorance. And yet—how could that be a delusion which enabled people to bear pain and grief which else would madden them?

He observed that faith in relics had before now arrested disease: that the will stirred thoroughly into action had been known to transcend the curative power of physic or physician. He added: "At the same time, I admit that there is something awfully grand as well as poetical in the idea of the direct communion of the human soul with the Deity, the Soul of the Universe. I can not say that at some future time, such may not be the normal relation of every soul to its Creator. It will be an order of things infinitely more grand than in the old days, when men went blindly to Him, putting the name of saints and martyrs before them, because they were ashamed to look Him in the face, having utterly lost all right appreciation of their own dignity, or of the true nature of God. If such a sentiment of communion with the Unseen were to come upon me unawares, I am inclined to think that I should do as you do, Estelle—accept it, and give myself up to the pleasure of it."

"Ah, my Raymond, if you could! Such moments are so good and pleasant. So father-and-child-like."

"But on the morrow, very likely, I should be as self-dependent, as severely philosophical as ever."

"And what then, Raymond? One can not have festival days every day, you know. And

surely, to feel God near but once in a lifetime, is a grand and glorious thing."

"Yes, *mignonne*, if one could be quite sure that it was God, and not the creature of one's own imagination. But to return to the boy. You know I promised to leave him entirely to you for some time yet; only I don't want to have to undo every particle of your teaching when he does come under my care. Therefore, I must beg you to make his first education as unbiased as possible; that is, to keep clear of dogmas."

It was not so difficult for her to promise compliance as it would have been when first she married. Anthropomorphic, as Raymond called her, yet her creed, as far as dogma went, was fast becoming assimilated to his—a Great Perhaps. She had remained firmer in her own faith, it may be, had she admired and loved him less. But as he had grown older, and especially since he had been much in the society of grave, sober men, most of whom had grown gray in the pursuit of what they conceived to be the truth, there had mingled gradually with his innate audacity, a humility which disarmed his wife's latent antagonism, touched her sympathies, and brought her half round to his side.

For there was greater nobleness, she saw, in his trembling negative, than in other men's bold assent, prompted by the cowardice which strove to stifle the "no" at the heart's core; the cowardice which recoiled from the time and patience and agony of thought required to make the "yes" a true one.

Was there not, she asked herself, greater purity in his soul, which shrank from doing homage by lip or knee to an unknown God, than in the souls of such as bent knee and muttered the prayer because of the good that was to accrue thereby to themselves, making their prayer a species of spiritual traffic, their praise a species of spiritual gymnastic?

Finally, if innocence of life and humbleness of heart, and a burning love for truth, promised future insight into truth, to whom should that insight be given, if not to him, who, meanwhile, shrank from no depth of doubt? Let that God, who knew his heart better than she did, be judge.

It was this trust in Raymond's future which preserved his wife's serenity unruffled in the midst of the discussions of philosophers of every school. Some she heard descanting on the great Soul of the Universe; others—Comtists these—propounding man's only want, and future worship, to be the glory and worship of woman; others, proclaiming the non-necessity of any God or any worship, yet shuddering, in spite of themselves, at the idea of infinite solitude, which was all they gained thereby: Raymond listening to each in turn, and looking eagerly for the germs of truth; lastly, listening to herself, if she could be induced to speak, which was but seldom, for the feeling of incapacity in clothing her own thoughts in learned language, and her distrust of her own logic, operated as a painful restraint on her; though he not unseldom assured her he would rather, if it could be so, find the clue to truth from her lips, than watch for it sitting at the feet of grave philosophers.

It can scarcely be wondered at, if she greatly withdrew herself from communion with those who would have loudly blamed her husband's conduct

without entering into his motives; if she ceased from joining in those acts of worship where he, from purely conscientious scruples, could not follow her; and yet where her appearance alone would be to those assembled a tacit reproach to him.

It is impossible to say how long her mind might have maintained its unruffled calm, had circumstances not brought them down to Languedoc, where, as of old, the two religions were brought before her in ceaseless antagonism, and she was forced, as it were, to choose between the two for her little son. Even at the risk of disturbing Raymond and making a new quarrel with madame, she would have felt it her duty to tell him the efforts made by the latter to bias the child's mind, had not his strong assurance of their return to Paris given her a sufficient reason for keeping silence respecting a trouble which a few weeks, at most, must put an end to.

It was like an English honeymoon, Raymond declared, as they rolled along the road to the mountains. He regretted that they had not had one. They would have one some day; they would go away, hide themselves somewhere for a month, and then emerge and go on in the beaten track again.

"And what should we do with Boy?" said Estelle.

"The little incumbrance!" said Raymond, gleefully; "why, he has two grandmamas. They should cast lots for possession."

It was astonishing how Raymond's spirits rose, Estelle thought, as soon as he was beyond his mother's reach. It was all very fine for people to talk of the necessity of exercising self-control, but there were, or ought to be, limits even to that virtue. She was conscious, herself, of a greater buoyancy, now that she was no longer watched by madame. If they only had the boy with them, their existence, for the time being at least, would be perfect. As things were, she said, they would have to postpone their honeymoon until their silver wedding.

"Until we have half a dozen little incumbrances," he cried, "and perhaps no grandmamas left to take care of them? No! Let us rather make use of present opportunities. I call this honeymoon number one. Next year we will devise number two. Seest thou, it can not be a honeymoon, unless I have thee all to myself—to myself. Ah! If we two could only go on like this, forever and forever! Dear, dearer far than on the day I called thee mine! Kinder far, more beautiful!"

Her hand sought his in the twilight. For they had been travelling all day, with only a rest during the hottest hours; and now they had entered the heart of the mountains. Lourdes, with its donjon keep standing threateningly on the summit of the bare rock, lay far behind. They were passing the dismantled tower of Bidalos, a relic of feudal times and petty warfare. Far before them lay the two mountain gorges: that of Caunterets to the right, and close to it on the left, the gorge of Luz, with the black mountain of Pierrefitte boldly blocking up the way to its fairyland of snow-peaks. The twilight came down fast, tinging rocks and slopes and vivid pasture lands with quiet gray. Only for one moment a ray of the setting sun lingered on the horn of the Pic de Viscos. It stood like a pink cloud

hovering above the peaks; then died away, and the night-wind suddenly rose and swept downward from the gorges, reviving man and beast with its cooling breath. The maize in the ear shook and the bean-pods flapped to and fro as it passed; the vines waved their long branches, and the roses lifted up their drooping heads and drank in the subtle moisture. The oxen ceased their lowing; the cry of the driver, the *arré*, that had resounded far and near all day long, ceased, with the last tinkle of the Angels-bell from the steeple of the highest church on the mountain side. The stars shone out from the depth of the pure sky. The spirit of peace brooded over the valley. They felt it was good to be there; the very silence blessed them.

"If it could only be thus," he murmured, his cheek resting on hers—"if we could only roll on thus, forever and forever!"

Without the anti-climax that awaited them at the end of the valley? "A thousand times yes," said she. And then she thought, remembering the last time she had passed through the valley, "How he loves me! How I wish he were my first love; for I do love him dearly, dearly! Only, if he were my first love, perhaps I should not long quite so much—who knows—to have Boy with me. Ah! my Raymond!"

It was almost pain to know how deeply he loved her. She felt as if she never should be able quite to fathom it. He felt no pain, she knew. He never should. And it was only at those rare moments when his heart stood thus open to her, showing the perfect entirety of his love, that she was made conscious of the flaw in her own. Oh, that little, little flaw! Was it worth a heart-ache? Was it not better that her love should have grown thus, in spite of the flaw, than that it should have cooled from its first glow? Yes. Far better, she told herself; since of two evils one naturally chooses the least.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BÉBÉ.

THERE was a letter from madame awaiting their arrival at the château of Beaucens. Estelle had written to her before leaving the de Luzarches, giving her a dutiful account of all that had been done and said (except the Paris question), and not omitting the dinner itself and the ladies' toilets. By such simple artifices she had hoped to win an answer to her inquiries—and they were not a few—about her boy. Madame's answers on that head were succinct. Little Henri, as she chose to call him, was perfectly well and happy, and had only cried for his mamma the first night. Hortense was anxious to establish the eldest of her sisters, now in the convent. The younger, the mother-superior believed to possess a decided vocation—not so the elder. It would be an act of kindness if Estelle were to mention the fact at a fitting opportunity. Lastly, she hoped her daughter-in-law would try the waters of Caunterets, since she was so near. There was no reason at all for hurrying back to Montaignu, and the hot springs were known to be most salutary.

Raymond caught at the idea, as madame had probably intended he should. Nothing could be easier, he said. Her friend Mathilde would be

able to drive up from Beaucens to see her; nay, she could have Hortense up to stay with her if she wished, while he was away in search of the izard and bouquetin on the Vignemale. It would be well, at all events, to consult some physician of repute for that nervousness which grandmamma had remarked and was anxious about.

"I am not nervous," she said, with a gesture of impatience and a hot flush that belied her words for the moment. Madame knew she was in the habit of showing her letters to her husband, and had written thus purposely, to prolong, as if by his agency, her separation from her boy.

"I will stay up at Cauterets or anywhere else, as long as you like, if you will but let me send for Bébé and Lisette," she said.

And fatigue herself with carrying him about? No, Raymond said, most decidedly. Besides which, such a course would offend grandmamma past recall, as arguing a want of confidence in her.

"And," he concluded, "as the child is perfectly happy and well, it would be rather a silly proceeding. If he were pining, I should be as anxious to have him with us as you are."

It was useless to contest the point. She could only write to madame and entreat her to let her hear every day. And she was not surprised—knowing what madame was—to be told in reply that a daily bulletin was not necessary in the child's present state of health. If he were attacked by illness, madame graciously added in a postscript, she would not fail to write instantly. There was no message from him this time; the rest of madame's paper was filled up with the prospects of the vintage, and her anxieties respecting a certain vineyard in which the *oïdium* had made its appearance. Then, by way of answer to Estelle's description of the society at the château, "I am glad you are extending your acquaintance on all sides. Depend upon it, your son will thank you for this when he grows up."

Estelle pointed out this to her husband, and they laughed together at the impossibility of picturing Bébé a tall young man, with a fine mustache, calling her mother; and then, while Raymond speculated aloud on the kind of education which would be safest for him, she sighed at the reflection that he never could look prettier than he did now, with his long curls and bare sturdy legs, and the embroidered frock that people thought so babyish; that he might even get ugly when he grew big, or rough, as Alfred did when he was sent to school.

"Grandmamma is odd, *mignonne*," said Raymond, "but that is no news. She does not mean to be unkind, and you must not be anxious."

So she had to be thankful that the days passed by without any letter, and enjoy her visit if possible, as madame herself would have prescribed. There was plenty of gossip by way of conversation; a few attempts at sketching the mountain scenery by some of the younger ladies—more, apparently, for the sake of the basis it afforded for paying of compliments than for love of the mountains themselves. There was also a solemn ascension undertaken by the whole party up as far as the Lac de Gaube, where Raymond, accompanied by the guides and some of the gentlemen staying at the château, left the ladies, and skirted the path to the left of the lake, on their way to the snowfields of the Vignemale. It was

a curious sight, and one that had not unfrequently led to attempts at caricature from Estelle's pencil when she had visited the mountains with her mother in her girlhood—that of a large party of ladies, of which she now for the first time formed one, all carried in sedan-chairs up the steep paths, past precipices, cascades, and overhanging crags, dressed in costumes only fit for the boulevards of Paris, and giving vent to their feelings by various trivial exclamations, of which "How sweetly pretty!" formed the staple.

Madame Mathilde, in pursuance of her aunt's plan, spared no pains to amuse Estelle. Madame Fleury had written further, saying that the old comte was known to be failing greatly, and that before another year was over probably Madame Raymond would be comtesse, *vice* Madame Octavie. Therefore, etc.—Mathilde understood, and gave such a pressing invitation to both Raymond and Estelle to prolong their stay, that Raymond, instead of one excursion, made several in the neighborhood, satisfied that at the château his wife could not possibly fall a prey to the *ennui* which the doctor said was to be guarded against so carefully.

But even excursions have their limits; and Estelle's heart beat high with pleasure the day they exchanged the valley of Argèles, with its vernal slopes and running streams, for the dreary, baked plains through which their road lay to Château Montaignu. Raymond, as they drew near their journey's end, got fidgety, as a sportsman might, about the two izards and the bouquetin which were slung to the bottom of the carriage, in a mountain hamper well packed in ice. Estelle lay back weary, but answered his queries when necessary, keeping back by a strong effort the question that rose to her lips, which she knew could not be answered yet: "How shall we find our boy?" She kept it back because she knew that Raymond would set it down to nervousness; would laugh at her "hyper-anxiety;" and then be vexed and anxious himself about her, perhaps begin feeling her pulse, or observe that she was too flushed or too pale, which worried and annoyed her beyond measure.

But when they entered the avenue, late in the evening, she could contain herself no longer. "At last!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how thankful I am not to have another night to pass without seeing my boy! Will they have kept him up, I wonder?"

That was not at all likely, Raymond said: grandmamma would never allow such a breach of discipline. He looked out as he spoke. There was a light in the nursery window and in his wife's drawing-room. The ground floor was in darkness. A presentiment of evil seized him. He was silent, trying to account for the position of the lights by the supposition that his mother, whose whims were legion, might have chosen to occupy that drawing room instead of her own. He hoped Estelle would not notice it.

But she did, as the carriage turned up the broad terrace. She drew in her breath as if she had been stabbed, and sank back trembling. Raymond put his arm round her and took her hands. They were as cold as ice.

"My darling," he said, "my own wife! It may be nothing, you know."

"Do you not see," she faltered; "there is no light even in your father's room?"

It was true. There was not a single light anywhere but at those two upper windows.

"There is illness; what is it?" said Raymond to old Jean-Marie, who appeared as the carriage drew up. Estelle had prepared to descend without a word. She dared not ask any questions.

"The heaven be praised," the old servant said, "that madame has arrived. The little monsieur had been bled, and every thing was going on for the best."

"Do you hear that?" Estelle said, turning to her husband. "They have been bleeding him. My boy will die; and *she* will have murdered him!"

Raymond hastened up stairs after her, filled with dismay. He knew only too well what prompted her passionate words. Their physician at Paris had once said for his guidance, that either to her or to the child depletion was certain death. And he knew that his mother was a great advocate of bleeding, that she was bled regularly every spring, and believed her daughter-in-law's horror of the Sangrado mode of treatment to be simply another instance of English eccentricity.

Hortense, hearing their arrival, had come to the head of the stairs to meet them, and had heard Estelle's speech.

"Madame has done every thing that was possible," she answered flippantly; "and there is no danger, not the slightest."

Estelle passed by her hastily without speaking. Raymond stopped for a moment. "How was it we were not sent for instantly—instantly?" he asked angrily. "When you all knew how sacred a trust our child was! When you all knew—you as well as any body—that nothing would have made me take away my wife but my anxiety for her health."

"I am not mistress here," was Hortense's reply; "and you had better address your observations to your mother. She can give you her reasons, cousin."

"Bah! I ought to have known that you had no heart, Hortense. Allow me to pass."

He followed his wife into the nursery. If the pertness of Hortense's reply angered him, much more did the scene that met his eyes as he entered. His father was crouching in a chair by the child's bed, with his eyes fixed upon the little form that lay apparently in an uneasy sleep. Lisette and madame's maid were in one corner telling their rosaries. The doors were open, and a crowd of servants were standing and sitting in the antechamber, whispering and shaking their heads as they noted the entrance of the father and mother. Madame de Montaigu herself stood at the foot of the bed, with her hand on Estelle's arm, talking earnestly in a loud whisper. The doctor would come again, she said, at ten o'clock. It was a case of diphtheria, but not dangerous, remedial measures having been promptly applied.

Estelle had listened to her like one in a dream. She now shook her hand off, saying in a tone of authority she had never used before in that house:

"This room must be cleared!"

Lisette made a move towards the door. No one else stirred. The servants crowding up the doorways were madame's servants, and she had not spoken; not so much as by a look or a sign did she indorse her daughter-in-law's order. She

had her rosary in her hand, too; Estelle's coming in had interrupted her, and her beads remained half told.

Raymond took in the situation at a glance. He went up to the intruders in the antechamber with his face all ablaze with anger. "Did you not hear Madame Raymond tell you to clear out?" he exclaimed in vehement patois. They knew the young master would be obeyed, and slunk away like whipped dogs.

M. de Montaigu lifted up his head, and begged feebly to be let stay. "I will keep quiet, only let me see him," he prayed. Raymond consulted his wife by a glance. She pointed to the thermometer over the mantel-piece; it stood at 90° Fahr. and Raymond went up to his father and said gently but inexorably, "It is impossible, father; I must beg you to come away." He led him into the drawing-room. When he returned, Estelle was alone; madame had not waited to be asked to go.

She came and fell on his neck, trembling. "Oh, Raymond, it is diphtheria—certain death," she whispered. "And our only boy—our only treasure!" Yet she forced back the cry of anguish that rose to her lips lest it should wake him.

Raymond uttered an imprecation. "Why were we not sent for?" he muttered, clenching his teeth.

Madame could best have answered that question.

What Raymond could do was done. A note was sent requesting the attendance of the doctor in Toulouse upon whom Estelle placed most reliance, and a telegram to their Paris medical attendant. Raymond expected his mother to be furious at having her own doctor dismissed, but that was a very small matter to him now.

When he came back to the nursery, he found his wife sitting by the bed with the child's hand in hers. "He has spoken," she said. "He knew me directly he opened his eyes."

The terrible stony look had left her face. She had his hand in hers, he had spoken, he felt her presence, he had given back her smile. Her husband saw that now the shock of learning the child's illness was over, hope had taken possession of her. He sat by her, and told her what he had done. "Oh, Raymond, what should I do without you?" was her answer.

Three days passed: days of alternate hope and fear; of steadfast watching on the part of the father and mother; of prayers, vows, regrets, conjectures, from other members of the household. Madame ordered a novena; the maids told their rosaries incessantly. As for Hortense, she was fully occupied in seeing all the people who came to inquire. M. de Montaigu came up stairs daily, helped by his valet and Raymond, and sat in the drawing-room, anxiously interrogating each one that passed in or out. "It was just possible that the child might recover," the doctors said; "but he never ought to have been bled."

That "just possible" gave M. de Montaigu a grain of hope that added fervor to his prayers. "Ah, yes," he exclaimed, "Heaven must give us back our little one, our only child. To take him would be to take the one ewe lamb. Heaven can not be so cruel, my good sirs." And to all the curé's attempts to prepare him gently for

what might be, he answered: "Dear abbé, Heaven will not be so cruel."

But the faint hope died away as the third day wore on. As the shadows grew longer, every one except the child's mother knew that before the next dawn the house of the Montaigus would be left desolate. Although she had spoken out her belief that he would die at the first, not even madame had courage to tell her now that death was at hand. She stood by the bed, muttering prayers to the Virgin. "If he recovers," she said, "I will make an offering to our Lady of Puy la Hun of a gold-embroidered mantle. I will—"

"The noise of your dress disturbs him," said Estelle in a cold, hard voice. She could scarcely bear madame to come near her. Lisette had found an opportunity to tell her how madame had tried to bring her boy under what she believed to be proper discipline. How not a day had passed without his being in disgrace. How the first symptoms of his illness had been made light of, and the irritability laid to the score of ill-temper. Lastly, how he had been put under Hortense's care, and how he had been missed, and found, hours after, by the distracted Lisette and Jean-Marie, crying, in a hollow of the marsh. Lisette gave her tongue full swing in commenting on Hortense's conduct.

"She forgot the poor lamb as soon as visitors came. She amused herself with the gentlemen, and when I inquired for him—for I dared not put my nose into the room while old madame was there—she said, with a shrug of her shoulders, the tiresome brat had hid himself in the garden somewhere, and I must go and look for him. She has a tiger's heart, that woman!"

And madame, coming back from the town, had wished to punish the child for escaping to the marsh and giving people the trouble of looking for him.

"If it had lasted a day longer," Lisette concluded, "I should have taken the little one in my arms and sought madame and monsieur up in the mountains."

"Oh," the mother groaned, "why was I ever persuaded to leave him? Why could I not stay at home as I wished?"

* * * * *

There had been a special service in the church. The benediction had been given, and the curé was gone to the château. Madame, Hortense, and nearly all the household still remained on their knees before the parish altar. D'Eyrieu walked up stairs unannounced. His post was with the dying, whether in château or hovel. The day had been stifling, and every door and window was thrown open now in hopes of a breath of cool air. Estelle sat alone by the bed, with her child's hand clasped in hers. She had smiled bitterly when M. de Montaignu told her that his wife and Hortense were gone to church to pray.

"Let them do what they like," she said, "as long as they leave me alone with my boy."

Raymond and his father were sitting in the antechamber when D'Eyrieu entered. They signed to him to pass on. Whatever his creed, Raymond felt the priest no intruder now. He stood for a moment in the doorway till Estelle looked up and saw him. Then he entered, saying, "*Pax vobiscum.*"

The look of horror came back to her face as on the night when she came home. She knew that the greeting of peace was but a message of death. D'Eyrieu had scarcely seen her, and he had not seen the child since his illness began, and the sight of the tender little face, all shrunk and white, affected him sensibly. He dared not trust himself to speak to this mother, frozen up in her despair. If she had but wept he might have spoken. But this was no Southern woman's wild grief, to be soothed by words of mingled comfort and authority. He made the sign of the cross, and then stood with clasped hands in silent prayer.

"There was a Mother—" he said at length, in a broken voice; "a Mother, who, like you, had an only Son—"

"Oh, hush!" she said, for she knew what he meant, "hush! oh, what can you know—what can you know about it?"

It was true. What should he, the childless man, know of the mother's agony? He was silenced, and betook himself to prayer again, this time to the Mother of Sorrows; entreating to be inspired with some fitting word.

"Pray, my child, pray," he said at last. That exhortation unfroze her: the tears that she had restrained, lest they should hinder her from watching, now burst forth and rained down in a torrent. The child opened his eyes and looked at her with a smile of recognition.

"Pretty mamma, don't cry," he murmured.

"I will not, darling," she answered, endeavoring with all her might to control herself. But her powers of endurance were worn out.

The curé took her hand between his own. "God help thee, thou poor mother," he said gently. "God strengthen thee for this hour. Alas that it must be so!"

She snatched her hand away. She could not even bear pity now. She only wanted to be left alone. He was kind-hearted, but his very kindness seemed an intrusion. "Forgive me, Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, choking, "but I can not bear this, and I—I must be strong as long as he wants me."

He moved away, and stopped to speak to M. de Montaignu, who sat with his son in the next room.

"Help me to pray, dear abbé," the old man said. Raymond said nothing. His eyes were strained to watch his wife's face in the twilight. He shrunk from looking closely at the death-struggle he could not relieve. Bitterly he was feeling his helplessness.

"If I had known—" her voice broke in on the old man's murmured prayers; "if I had known—what agony it was to lose a child—never, never would I have married! My God, let me die too, for this is too hard to bear!" Her voice died away in uncontrollable sobs.

D'Eyrieu heard what she said. She had never meant to speak loud. It was, even then, but the unconscious raving of supreme agony. He rose, and said to Raymond, in a tone of authority, "My son, you can do no good here. Come with me."

He led him down stairs and into the garden; and then he saw by the dim light that Raymond had heard too—what he would have given worlds to have kept from him. They walked up and down for some time, the old man supporting the younger.

"My poor wife!" said Raymond, at last. "You heard her, father?"

"I heard," d'Eyrieu replied. "Do not dwell on it; she is half crazed, and knows not what she says. I, whose office it is to comfort, see that words are a mockery. We must let her alone!"

But that had been the one hard thing to do, for Raymond. Let her alone! Her, for whom he would willingly have purchased immunity from sickness, sorrow, and death, at the price of any amount of suffering to himself!

"I swear to you," he said, stopping suddenly in his walk, "that, deep as this blow strikes, I would lose ten sons rather than give her up. And I thought—"

"My son," said d'Eyrieu, solemnly, "think nothing. We, finite that we are, can as soon hope to fathom the depths of the Love Eternal, as to understand all that an earthly mother feels when she sees her child die. Do not think; or, if you do, think this—that the child is hers—bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, life of her life, her very self. Not even you, poet as you are, can enter into the mystery of her grief. How should you?"

Raymond groaned aloud. "I know, I know," he said. "But I know how I love her. You can not understand that, either . . ."

"She will want you, and you alone, by-and-by," d'Eyrieu said.

They stood looking at the château. Lights began to glimmer in the offices, and a faint muffled ray appeared from the window of the sick-chamber. Raymond roused himself. He ought to go in, he said. The women would be worrying her; they could not understand her shrinking from clamorous sympathy. And there was his mother's error in judgment, making bitterness where there ought to be union. He could not get at the bottom of that strange misunderstanding, that unaccountable antipathy that had suddenly sprung up on Estelle's side. It was true, there had been no attempt at explanation, there had not been time. He felt bitterly remorseful himself at having persuaded his wife to stay away against her wishes. That had been an error of judgment, too. Would she, in this hour of distress, visit it upon him?

* * * * *

Lisette met them as they entered the court.

"Ah, monsieur," she cried, wringing her hands. "Ah, Monsieur le Curé! Alas, alas, poor dear lady!"

"Go to her, my son," said d'Eyrieu. "She will want you now."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LEFT DESOLATE.

AND so it was all over. All the hope, and the fear, and the watching; the abject vow and the passionate prayer. And again the household, just like the world outside, went on as usual. There was the vintage to gather, and the maize to hoard, losses and gains to count over. That was not wonderful. Why should it not weep, or laugh, or dance, as it pleased—this world? It was welcome. Estelle was no more surprised at

that, than that autumn rain should succeed to summer drought.

But that any among the eager, busy crowd should step aside to offer her comfort, was very wonderful indeed to Estelle.

Comfort! For that beautiful head, never more to nestle in her bosom! those feet, so swift to run to her; those hands, that clung to hers so firmly, that stroked her cheek so softly; never more! Comfort, for this; to the desolate mother!

She let them say their say. If they were so ignorant as to think that the blank in her heart could be filled up with words, why, let them be. Better that, than the knowledge that was hers. She was not impatient, only she tried quietly not to come more than could be helped in the way of such comforters.

"If they would not say so much!" she thought wearily to herself, while she sat out the infliction of their visits, dry-eyed; apathetic, some thought. Hardened, thought M. Cazères—hardened under a merciful chastisement. And he warned her, as he believed it his duty to do, that even worse might befall her, if she did not kiss this rod with submission. She sat silent until he had finished; not listening much or caring much. It was his way, she knew. She had heard him administer such verbal punishment to others, and now it was her turn to bear the lash. He thought it right, and how should he know or understand more than the rest?

But his wife, who had sat by while he delivered this warning, not daring to interrupt or modify its harshness by so much as a look—she, poor cowardly little woman, ran back into the room again, as soon as they had left it, saying she had lost her handkerchief, or what not. "I will overtake thee," she cried to her husband. She had lost nothing at all, only she wanted to say something to Madame Raymond. She could not warn, she could not comfort: she was not eloquent, alas! like the pastor. Only she could not bear to see that sweet young face with its new look of helpless suffering. If she could but win a word from those dumb compressed lips, were it but an expression of hopeless grief—any thing would be better than that mute acquiescence. She ran back. Estelle was sitting still on the chair into which she had dropped when they had turned their backs. She was thinking—was it worth while to give orders that she would not see the pastor if he called again? Was it worth while, or not? Did a stab more or less matter much, to a heart pierced through with such a sorrow?

"For only my heart knows its own bitterness," she was saying to herself, when little Madame Cazères ran in and took hold of her nerveless hands. She looked up in surprise.

"Oh, my dear," cried the pastor's wife, "I don't know what to say, only I can't bear to see you so. I know what it is, my dear. I have gone through it all. Ever so many years ago, dear, but I've not forgotten—no, not though other little ones came to me after a time, as God pleased. Dear children, every one of them; but I could not forget *him*, if I had tried. No, dear, we never forget—we mothers. Even now, when I think of that time, and how beautiful he was, and how good"—and the tears trickled down Madame Cazères's sallow cheeks—"I try to be resigned, but I can't always."

Estelle put up her face to be kissed. "You know," she said; "you understand. Will you come again? I shall like seeing you." And then she wept the tears that had refused to fall at M. Cazères's exhortation.

But he, when his wife rejoined him, and said how much she was affected, thought that it was the work of his own eloquence. She had been awakened, he said; and he went back to his house in Rue Filatiers, and studied a discourse for the next sabbath on the same theme—warning to the hardened and impenitent. But she was not there to hear, when the next Sabbath came; and he was sorry, and chafed that the seed of his word should have fallen among stony places. But he did not prevent his wife from going to see her, as he might if she had remained without a shadow on her prosperity. His wife, being his wife, might have a seasonable word for the mourner. But Madame Cazères never remembered any of her husband's sayings well enough to give them second-hand. She was not clever, she knew; and when she saw people in trouble, every thing seemed to go out of her head except a wish to help them out of it.

But the rich English lady and the poor pastor's wife had widely different paths: and for the latter, at least, there was no choice as to her treading or leaving hers. And so Estelle soon found herself alone again, or worse than alone, in her own circle: for to be with her mother-in-law and Hortense was worse than the bitterest loneliness. They tried to rouse her. They told her it was her duty to be cheerful. Hortense told her so, who thanked Heaven that she had never had a child; madame, who had ignored the sweetest ties of motherhood. She shrank from both of them. She would have told them why—she would have said to their faces that they had murdered her boy: only—madame was Raymond's mother. And if she were silent to madame, she could well afford to be silent to poor foolish little Hortense.

But madame was not foolish, in the sense of not being capable of weighing her actions. Hortense had repeated to her Estelle's first words on entering the house; in a moment of irritation with Raymond, not with any settled ill-will to Estelle: and the old lady had brooded over them, and had retorted the same, when the treatment of the child was altered—partly because she was angry, partly because she really believed it. And nothing would do but that she must tell her son afterwards. It was very hard for Raymond to bear. He had simply believed that his wife knew best, and had acted accordingly; and now to be told that had he but disregarded her wishes their child might have lived, was indescribably bitter. To feel that he had kept her away even a few days from the child for her good, was bad enough; but to be told besides what his mother told him, and firmly believed, made the burden almost greater than he could bear. So that, while Estelle was never tired of recalling the lost darling's pretty ways, never happy unless she were sitting in the midst of all that could remind her of him—his toys, his little books, the many portraits of him, each possessing some look, some trait too precious to be parted with—it was Raymond's wish to bury every remembrance out of sight; to deaden, as far as possible, the agony that went nigh to unman him. He would have taken his wife back to Paris, but she could not tear herself

away from the little grave she could just see, now the trees were getting bare, from her window. She could not understand his longing for oblivion. When the autumn rains fell, tearing up the earth and beating down the plants, she wept because it was raining so heavily on *him*; and did not understand Raymond's start of horror when he saw what she meant. And when, at last, he could bear it no longer, and besought her, if she loved him, to cease to allude to the irreparable loss which they both had to bear—to try, for his sake, to take some interest in the affairs of the outer world, some interest in any thing, no matter what, so that it dwelt not on sorrow and death—she, consenting (when did she ever despise his wishes?), yet thought bitterly, "He wants to forget, already. He loved him less than I did." And this thought made her sorrow heavier, if possible.

But now there could be no question of leaving Château Montaignu, even had she wished it for herself. Monsieur had become rapidly feeble since his grandson's death. He had insisted on following him to the grave, although he had not put his foot outside the grounds for the whole summer. Now, they said, he was dying slowly. He took to his bed and lay there, waiting with more composure than could have been hoped for the last change. The curé visited him daily after mass, read with him, and talked with him, and played a game of draughts or dominos. Raymond read the *Débats* to him, and told the news of the city; madame and Hortense rustled in and out, and tried to be gay, in order to keep him from being gloomy. Only Estelle came seldom. Not because she felt no wish to help to beguile the old man's weariness: she would have done her best, as heretofore. But the sight of her agitated M. de Montaignu too much. "Her face, her sad voice even, is an accusation," he said to d'Eyrieu. "She ought to have been sent for immediately. I said so to my wife. But—you know my wife. She always knows best. She bade me hold my tongue, as usual. She believes, even now, that she did perfectly right; and she will, to the end of the chapter. Tell my daughter-in-law that I love her tenderly, but manage that she shall stay away, dear abbé."

D'Eyrieu managed it very cleverly, as he told M. de Montaignu afterwards; for the old gentleman was extremely anxious that her feelings should not be hurt, and laid many injunctions on the curé to that end. Rather than wound the heart of his daughter-in-law, he would let her sit with him all day long, he said. But Estelle was not wounded. Nothing could wound her now. "I suppose I may get him his little bouquet, and say 'good-morning,' as usual," she said. "And I shall always be grateful to him for—for his kindness to my little one. For the rest, it shall be as he pleases. I know I am no longer capable of cheering any one." Perhaps she was not altogether ill-pleased to keep away, for by doing so she saw less of her mother-in-law and Hortense, and could sit for hours, unhindered, by her boy's grave.

And this was how the members of this household stood in relation to each other when the winter set in.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A NEW TROUBLE.

THERE had never been such a winter, people said. The winds swept wildly across the great plain, tearing off the roofs of barns and dovecotes, shattering the trees, leaving desolation behind wherever they went. Then followed snow-storms, such as had scarcely ever been known in Langue-doc. And when the snow melted under the influence of a cloudless day, the night brought a frost that nipped the vines and killed the pomegranate and the fig-trees. In the north the rivers were frozen, and travelling was considered dangerous, either by rail or by diligence, until there should be at least a partial thaw. Stories were rife of wolves that had been seen crossing the high-road on their way down to the lower grounds—starved out of the mountains, said the peasants. They came and asked Raymond to head them in a wolf-chase; for, besides the desirability of clearing the country of such noxious intruders, there was the certainty of a premium for every wolf caught and presented at the Préfecture. Raymond went, nothing loath, and it was to watch for him that his wife stood, one bitterly cold evening, at the window that looked down the avenue, with a letter in her hand.

This letter had been delayed more than a day, from the blocking up of the road between Bordeaux and Toulouse. It was from her brother Harry, telling her that her mother was ill, and that he was going to bring her to Paris, where he hoped Estelle would meet her. He would bring her all the way down to Pau, he wrote, only he could not venture so far from England, now that he expected to be appointed to a ship. "The little mother," he concluded, "thinks she is in a dangerous state. The doctors don't. But they say she requires a great deal of nursing. Mind you keep her spirits up. She says to-day that she shall never live to reach Pau; yesterday she said she had no chance if she didn't get there. So, you see, it is this abominable winter that has withered her. She was very jolly when I came home. The papers say you have had a spell of bad weather as well as we folks in the north. But as for our winter, the Arctic regions are nothing to it. The little mother says you will find us at the hotel at Paris; she sends her love, and all that, but she evidently is not up to talking or giving directions. She has got a new maid, who doesn't suit, and I heard her wishing for old Mathurine to-day in the most piteous manner. Could you not try to get the old thing for her? But I know you would if you could, for you were never a whit behind in making her comfortable, as far as in you lay."

She had thought—how little she knew herself—that she could never be glad or sorry, or anxious or impatient again. Yet here she had been standing ever since she got the letter, watching for her husband in a fever of impatience. She did not choose to go down stairs, or meet any one till he had decided what she should do. She would like to set off that very night, if he would let her. But there should be no interference from madame.

So she stood, straining her ear to catch the sounds of footsteps up the avenue; opening the casement in spite of the bitter wind that was blowing. When she heard them coming, she

rang for Jean-Marie to meet his master on the terrace, and say she wished to speak to him immediately.

And not too soon. For among the crowd that presently collected on the terrace, Hortense stood, with a hood over her head, tempted out into the cold probably by the novelty of seeing a real dead wolf, and of exchanging a word with Raymond.

For the day had been so bitterly cold that, strange to say, there had not been a single gentleman caller, nor a caller of any sort, except the abbé, who did not count. Madame Hortense had been conjugating the verb *s'ennuyer* ever since twelve o'clock, and was mightily glad to have Raymond back to speak to.

She stroked the wolf, called it "poor thing," and turned away her pretty head when the peasant who bore it showed her the mark of the bullet—M. Raymond's bullet—that had gone through the beast's heart, he said, with a broad grin.

Now Raymond had not expected any one to meet him, but when he saw Hortense emerge from the archway, he looked, supposing that his wife was behind. And when he saw she was not, he straightway was angry. And then he was angry with himself for being angry with her.

"I am a fool!" he thought to himself. "Why should I be thinking of *that* now?"

"*That*" was the speech he had overheard the night the child died. It had occurred to him once or twice before. He hated himself for remembering it. He drove it away from him. But a mere nothing, a trifling incident like this of her not coming to meet him after a day's absence, sent it back again to torment him.

"She was mad," he thought; "delirious. Do I not know she was? My poor Estelle! After all that agony, that intensity of despair, what could be expected? What a monster I am to remember her ravings to her disparagement! Is this the love I thought so perfect? Fool!"

And muttering "Fool" to himself, he stamped his foot on the ground, and clenched his hand with a vehement gesture. A peasant close by him offered his brandy-flask.

"Monsieur finds it cold," he observed, "and truly it will be hard frost again to-night."

"Thanks, friend," was the rejoinder, "but I am not cold to speak of." He took a sip out of politeness, and restored the flask to its owner.

"And, oh, cousin," piped Hortense, "behold you at last! And have you no word to say? Has the wolf robbed you of your tongue?"

"Where is my wife?" He had not intended to ask her that question. It came out somehow in spite of him.

Hortense drew her scarlet hood round her with a coquettish air.

"Really," she said, with one of her pretty shrugs, "your wife may be up in the turret, or in the chapel, or anywhere else, for aught I know. I have not seen her since breakfast. She does not honor us down stairs with her society much, you know."

Jean-Marie came up and prevented a reply.

"Good heavens!" thought Raymond, "and she is ill perhaps, and I could think so of her—could think her unloving, neglectful!" He hurried up to her boudoir.

"There you are!" she cried, springing to him. "Oh, Raymond, I have been watching for you nearly an hour. I could hardly keep away when

I saw you from the window, though I knew you would scold if I came down in the cold wind. But, dearest, read this—quick."

Raymond read it, and looked very grave. His wife was clearly wanted at Paris, yet how to let her go he knew not, in such bitter weather. He knew as little how to say "no" when she flung herself down by him, crying, "Oh, love, love, I must go! I must, I must! Ah! I am afraid I forgot poor mamma sometimes when I was so—so happy. But now she wants me, and I must go to her. Nobody understands nursing her so well as I do. I must go this minute, Raymond!"

"I want to think," said he.

"There can be no thought about the matter," she cried. "Say yes, before you leave this room, Raymond; before you see madame. Say yes, love!"

There was no resisting such pleading, even, if he had wished.

"I only hesitated because I was thinking of the weather," he said. "I have but you to take care of now, you know. Only you, alas! And if you fall ill, wife mine!"

Oh, she thought, how wicked she had been to imagine that he had forgotten or wanted to forget their darling!

How she loved him! How she clung to him, thanking him mutely for even that distant allusion to their common grief!

"I will not be ill, dear," she said at last, raising her head from his shoulder. "I will take care, trust me. And you will let me set off to-night?"

He had not thought of that. But if she would not wait till to-morrow, why, go she could; he was not going to cross her. And then madame's footman came up to say Madame le Comtesse was served, and was Monsieur Raymond returned, and was Madame Raymond coming down to dinner or not? Madame knew perfectly well that her son was in the house.

No, Estelle said, she was not coming down; she must direct and help Lisette, if she wished her packing to be done in time. Raymond went down, and gave orders, as he went, to Jean-Marie about getting out the carriage, and getting himself ready.

Raymond said not a word to his wife about the scene that ensued in the dining-room when he announced his intention of accompanying his wife as far as Paris.

Madame declared that monsieur might die any day; that Raymond's conduct was most unfilial; that, in fine, she would not be left.

Raymond offered to abide by his father's decision.

"Go, my son," said the old man, when the matter was explained to him. "She must go, and it would not be well for her to travel alone. Think not of me. It seems that I am a long time dying."

And it was a relief to get away, even with his father in that state; even though he knew that his duty bade him return to the château as soon as he had taken his wife to her mother. He dreaded Estelle's going back to her Paris home; but Mrs. Russell was so ill that Estelle was only too thankful to have a quiet house for her, instead of the noisy hotel. And having seen them both installed, Raymond left them to resume attendance on his father.

It was not till many weeks had passed that Mrs. Russell was fit to proceed on her journey. They went down by easy stages to Pau, where Raymond had engaged apartments for them. At the cost of another scene with his mother, he came over from Château Moutaigu to see Estelle. He was doubly anxious about her, as she had spoken in her last letters of having scarcely left the house all the time of her stay in Paris.

"Let me look at you," he said, holding her so that the light fell on her face. She smiled and flushed up, and said she was well enough.

"She is looking like a ghost, at all events," said Mrs. Russell from her sofa. "A mere ghost. And no wonder, sitting up night after night as she has done. But don't bear me malice, Raymond; I hope it won't occur again. I shall send her out to walk now."

"Am I really looking dreadful, Raymond?" said his wife. "Am I looking like a ghost?"

No, he said. No. And when Estelle had left the room, and Mrs. Russell said she must be worn out, and that she was looking very thin and ill when she came to her in Paris, he said, was it so? or was it his mother-in-law's fancy?

He could not see any change. She had never changed to his eyes since the day he married her.

Mrs. Russell did not contradict her son-in-law. It was not worth the fatigue. But she thought privately that her daughter had "gone off" dreadfully; that she herself, in spite of her severe illness, was comparatively much better preserved than Estelle. If any body had mentioned the subject, she would have said coldly that she was an old woman, and had done long ago with good looks. She would have said it in such a way that the speaker would not have ventured to touch on the subject of personal appearance again; would have felt abashed, in short, at his or her temerity. Yet, privately, she hugged herself for her good looks. It was as good as a tonic to her to see by her glass how wonderfully well-preserved she was, while Estelle, poor thing, was so sadly faded. Estelle, at forty would not be fit to be seen, unless she rouged or did something to improve herself. It was a satisfaction to Mrs. Russell to know she might have changed her name many a time since she had settled her daughter, and gone back to England. The last man smitten was a lord of the admiralty, to whom she had spoken in behalf of her son the lieutenant, and her son Alfred, who had just reached the age when he was eligible for a nomination to a cadetship. The boy got the nomination, was sent on board the training-ship, and passed his examination triumphantly.

Then, and not till then—from a combination of public and private circumstances—did the lord of the admiralty make the widow an offer of his hand and heart. She refused him.

"You don't remember," she said, very composedly, "or perhaps you don't know, that I am a grandmother."

No. The lord of the admiralty certainly was not aware of that fact: could not have believed it, except from her own lips.

It was so, however, she assured him. She was very grateful, very much honored. If she had had a daughter— But for herself, it could not be.

What a fortunate thing it was, she thought,

when she had got rid of him, that the man had not asked her before Alfred was fairly in the navy.

"For," the widow's cogitation ran, "I should have been forced to accept him for the dear boy's sake. And it would have been a terrible trial to put up with him—or any body else."

She had done her duty by her husband, and her duty by her three children, and now she intended to enjoy herself. It was during a tour in the Highlands that she caught her illness. When she was very ill indeed, I think she wished she had an unmarried daughter, free to nurse her and take care of her. She was such a proud little woman that she would never have asked Estelle to come to her, if Harry had not insisted upon it. When she had got her, however, she confessed that Harry had done a wise thing. To which the lieutenant replied that he generally knew what he was about.

It was a dreary winter for Estelle. Pau was full to overflowing with English invalids, and she could not walk along the streets or the park, or look at the mountains from the balcony, without seeing a dozen people with aspirators, not to mention the crowds that crawled along on the sunny side of the way, muffled up in furs and plaid comforters, and stopping, out of breath, at the gentlest ascent. The good looks that Mrs. Russell eyed with such complacency in her hand-mirror were only a source of anxiety to her daughter. She thought the white too clear, the pink too pink, the blue eye too brilliant. It wrung her heart to see how pretty her mother looked in her invalid cap of white lace. She dared not leave her; dared not believe the physician when he said she was mending, and would be fit to go to the mountains as soon as the season began. She grew paler and thinner than ever from anxiety, and wished for her husband to help her to bear it. But Raymond could not come. His father lay now at death's door, now rallying again. They said he might live a week, or six months.

Raymond dared not leave him, unless Estelle herself was ill. His mother, strange to say, was in a better humor than usual. Estelle hoped it would last. It might last, very likely, as long as she was away.

It was pleasant, in spite of her life being so overclouded just now, to get Raymond's letters. These could be called letters; what she had had before were notes—scraps written to tell her of his safe arrival, or of the day of his return, after his very short and rare excursions from home. His letters now were pages long, well filled, well written; a kind of daily chronicle, which she combed over and put by to read again. They were her only amusement: for it was stupid work riding with old Jean-Marie instead of Raymond; and it was equally stupid to stroll along in the park attended by Lisette, who thought it her duty to enlighten her mistress on divers matters which were not her business or Estelle's either. How, for instance, that the people on the third floor had quarrelled with their cook, and the people on the fourth had not paid their month's rent, and the monsieur down stairs was very ill, and the owner of the house wanted the rent raised, and he was going away in consequence; and there was a new family coming in—a *milord*, who had been staying at the Hôtel de France for ever so long, because, in the whole city of Pau, there was

nothing in the way of furnished apartments that would suit *miladi*.

One day as Estelle was resting on the balcony, after having read all the *Times* through to her mother, and sent her to sleep, she saw this new English family arrive. A courier, two maids, two men, various boxes, and, after them, a tall gentleman who stooped and had his face hidden in one of the usual plaid comforters; then two little girls, and a very fine mamma in a pork-pie hat and a round veil, who answered snappishly when the tall gentleman spoke to her. There was a great commotion by-and-by in the rooms below, a slamming of doors and opening and shutting of windows, and presently the two children came out for a romp on the lower balcony. Pretty little dots they were, only dressed too much like opera-dancers to please Estelle's fastidious taste. But their blue eyes, and fair complexions, and golden hair made them irresistibly charming to her in spite of their dress; her hungry mother-heart yearned towards them; she promised herself a game of play with them before long; and sat watching their gambols on the balcony till Lisette came to tell her Mrs. Russell was awake again.

Just at the end of the winter, when the mountain snows were beginning to melt and swell the Gaves, when the birds were beginning to chirp, when Nature was putting forth her strength to break her bonds and make good her allegiance to spring, old M. de Montaignu died.

Died, just as the first violets came, sent from Pau by his daughter-in-law as a loving token. For he had sent a message to her once to say he missed his daily bouquet, and she had taken care to supply his whinn, even at that distance, afterwards.

The bouquet had been laid on his bed, Raymond wrote, and he sent his love and thanks to Estelle, and a message to say that since he had lived long enough to see the first spring violets, he hoped to see her too, if she did not stay away too long.

And that night he died; quietly, so that they only knew it in the morning.

Two days later the grandfather was laid to rest by Bébé's side, and Raymond was Count de Montaignu.

It made little change for Estelle, except that now she was addressed as Madame la Comtesse, for which she did not care.

Only she hoped she might see more of Raymond, now that the last duties were over.

It was astonishing how many cards were left at her door as soon as all the world knew the old count was dead. People who would have let her go by unnoticed for a century, while he lived, now took the trouble to find out who and what Comtesse Octavie's successor was. Amongst them all, Madame Fleury's niece, Mathilde, came foremost. Her stiff, somewhat prosy husband had got the préfecture of the Basses Pyrénées at last, and had been made Baron de Beaucens into the bargain; and Estelle, who thought of her own title as little as if she had been born with it, was slightly amused to see how Mathilde ruffled the feathers of her new-fledged dignity.

"How long have you been married?" said Mrs. Russell one day, abruptly. Estelle had thought she was asleep, and started nervously.

"Just seven years," she replied; "seven years this spring."

"If your husband dies, and leaves no heir, who succeeds?" was Mrs. Russell's next question.

"I don't know. I never thought of it; some twentieth cousin, I believe. Why, you don't think Raymond was looking ill when last he was here?" she said hurriedly.

"No. I only wanted to know whether the title would become extinct. It would be a pity, considering there are so few of the really old ones left."

"Raymond says he does not care about titles." "He will, now he has got one," was Mrs. Russell's reply.

Estelle was left to draw her own inferences from this speech of her mother's. In the midst of all her grief, it had never once occurred to her that Raymond would regret the having no heir to the title. It was simply *her child* that she had lost, not the future Comte de Montaignu.

"If I could but have kept my boy, my only treasure!" she thought many a time, weeping, as she sat and listened to the pretty English children at play. They had made friends by this time, and nodded "good-morning" to her daily from the balcony. By-and-by, when they had got quite accustomed to her black dress, she would send and ask permission for them to visit her, she thought. She told Lisette to find out their name. That was easily done, Lisette said. She had but to watch when the English *miladi* went for her drive, and then she would inquire of the cook; all the other servants, as far as she knew, were English.

Lisette's face was very comical when she came back. "What does madame think?" she exclaimed. "I went to stand on the outer stair to see *miladi* get into the carriage, and, *pardie!* it was no stranger at all, but just Ma'm'selle Julie. She had her veil up and I saw quite well."

"Did you ask the name?" said Estelle, surprised.

"No, indeed! I just came back to tell madame. I can do so, of course."

"Never mind it," said Estelle, who did not wish to renew her acquaintance with Julia Maurice. She had been very sorry for her, after her escapade at Toulouse; she had thought of her very tenderly. But she felt sure her husband would not approve of her as an acquaintance. If Julia found her out, she must see her, but seek her she would not. And, remembering how little love was lost between her mother and Julia Maurice, she supposed herself safe from any renewal of intercourse on her side. Nevertheless, she was sorry not to know more of the two pretty children. She found herself wondering sometimes who Julia could have married. It was somebody, at all events, who had a very bad cough. They never went out together; the *milord* drove out in a close carriage, and *miladi* in an open one, generally a pony-phaeton; and a grand turn-out for the eyes of the Pau people it was, with its two lovely grays, and the tiger in blue and silver. *Miladi*, with a white bearskin rug round her, a scarlet cloak, and flayaway hat and feather, might have been satisfied with something less than the notice she attracted. However, one of the two flaxen-haired children generally sat by her side, as a vindication of her claim to the dignity of British matronhood, which might else have been ignored by the ignorant foreigners, less

accustomed then, than they are now perhaps, to the divers phases of "fast" English society.

However, the Pau people got accustomed to *miladi's* turn-out before very long, possibly because a new sight had arisen; to wit, a Russian princess, who drove a pair of high-stepping bays, and smoked her Havana as only such a princess may, walking up and down the Place, accompanied by monsieur her husband, also smoking his Havana.

Miladi, with her white bearskin rug, her scarlet cloak, and naughty little hat and feather, was worth staring at no longer; even the tiger and the ponies were passed by unnoticed, thanks to the audacity of this Muscovite.

Miladi saw this, and hated her with all her heart. She had not risked her gray ponies' lives to be outdone by a Russian, forsooth, were she the Czarina herself.

But as to circumventing her, why, that was quite another thing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A MEETING.

"My Raymond," Estelle wrote to her husband, "when can you come to me? I would not tell you how I missed you while you were watching poor old grandpapa, but I may say it now. I do say it. Raymond, I am wearying for you. Even your letters become tame and dry to me, because I want you, your own self, so much. Can not your mother and Hortense get on together for a little while?"

It was the answer to this letter that sent her out late one afternoon under the beech-trees in the park, in the broad walk above the Gave.

Raymond refused to come.

Told her—she could hardly believe it—to have patience yet a little longer; to be calm, and wait.

When a woman, habitually exercised in the practice of calmness and patience, is exhorted thereunto as if she had failed in both, it is just the way to make her very angry and very impatient.

And Estelle was very angry. So angry, that she had put on her bonnet after getting her husband's letter, and had come out under the beech-trees to reason with herself, and let her anger evaporate in walking to and fro, without a word to Mrs. Russell or Lisette.

It was not Raymond she was angry with, in reality, although she had crumpled and twisted his letter so. It was madame.

Madame, who had been already so cruel to her; who had tried to separate her and her boy; who had tried once before to make mischief between her and her husband; who was trying now, steadfast in hard-heartedness, in spite of the widowhood that might have softened her, if any thing could.

Raymond wrote kindly: she had to confess that, as she read his letter over; but it was too hard to have him kept from her, all because madame chose to tyrannize.

But how could madame, who had plagued her husband in one way or another for so many years, understand what it was to want a husband, except as somebody to plague *ad libitum*?

Now she would plague Raymond; and Ray-

mond would come back to his wife by-and-by, nervous, irritable, out of tune, to be soothed to rest.

It was soothing to her own mind to feel so sure of her power in this respect: a mesmeric power he had once called it, when the touch of her soft fingers and the coo of her voice had exorcised the brain-weariness arising from much deep thought.

Her anger against madame evaporated as she walked on, thinking of this. She took patience; nay, she went so far as to give Raymond credit for his strength of mind in keeping away from her.

She forgot the obnoxious exhortation that had roused her to anger, and simply accepted the fact—that he could not come yet; that she must wait a while.

She could not, did not, forgive madame: how could she? For she was—she had long felt it instinctively—her enemy, and a dangerous one. She felt now that she was at her old work—mischiefs-making.

But she must wait. She could not write to Raymond, "Your mother hates me, chooses to hate me. Why, she best knows; but so it is. She is not lonely in reality; but she makes you believe it is so, in order to separate you from me."

She would not say this, simply because madame was her husband's mother.

"And it must end—it must," she thought, as she walked up and down the leafy avenue along by the Gave.

By-and-by, when the summer came, madame would get tired of having her chateau empty, would fill it with her friends and acquaintances as in bygone times; enjoy society in a grave, private, decorous kind of way, and let Raymond go.

She walked on, a little stirred, perhaps; or rather, less passively sorrowful—for a quiet, deep under-current of sorrow had grown to be her habitual mood—but able to drink in the beauty of the scene around; drink deeply, though not as in the dear days when the Angel of Death seemed far off.

Yet who, in sorrow or gladness, could see that long panorama of stream and hill and forest and jagged snow-crest unmoved? when the very water, as it tumbled over rock and stone downward to the broad Atlantic—its last home—sang, Glory be to God!

She staid, listening to it, and to the sigh of the warm spring breeze and the note of the cuckoo, till the lengthening shadows warned her to return home. The park was becoming deserted. She heard the Bearnaise nursemaids calling the children from their play on the grassy slopes, and the receding carriage-wheels at the park entrance. As the silence grew, the tumbling, whirling Gave sang louder and louder, Glory be to God!

And on earth, peace!

Peace, in despite of a mother-in-law's mischief-making.

But at that moment she heard a child's cry—a pitiful, tired cry, that made her forget madame, and hurry onward in the direction from which it proceeded.

Down in the midst of fern and long grass lay the owner of the childish voice, a well-dressed little girl. Estelle called to her first in French

and then in English. The little maiden stopped crying and raised her head, and Estelle recognized her as one of the pretty children whose play she was in the habit of watching from her balcony.

"My pet, how came you there?" she cried, hastening down to her.

"I was playing hide-and-seek with some little girls, and I lost my shoe, and can't find it anywhere," the child answered, relapsing into sobs, and showing a dainty little foot, only protected by a silk stocking stained by the rank grass.

"Poor little darling!" She looked so dreadfully forlorn, in spite of her fine dress, that Estelle stooped down without a word more and kissed her warmly.

"Now then," she said, when the child had returned her kiss, "we won't cry any more. We will try to find this shoe."

But after a long search it became evident that the shoe was irretrievably lost, and that the little maiden must get home without it. She looked disconsolately at her shoeless foot, and the tears gathered in her eyes again.

"I think I must try to carry you," said Estelle. "If we can manage to get down as far as the lower walk, we may meet a boy or a peasant-woman, perhaps, and I will send for a carriage to take us home."

The child was not very heavy—not so heavy as her own boy had been. But mothers do not feel the weight of their own children. Estelle was obliged to rest as soon as she came to a seat. Then it struck her as very comical that she should be carrying Julia's child. Raymond would be vexed if the little adventure led to a renewal of acquaintance, as it would very likely, and no help for it. But it was comical, nevertheless. It struck her as very strange that the child should be all alone, however; it seemed like neglect on the part of the attendant. Such a finely-dressed child might have been stolen for the sake of its clothes. She asked how she came to be alone. Had she run away from her nurse?

"Nurse doesn't like France," said the child, "and she went away yesterday. And papa took me out. The little girls asked me to come and play, and he said I might. He said he would come for me when he had done reading the newspaper; but he didn't come. And afterwards the little girls ran away, and I couldn't find them, and I couldn't find papa. And I lost my shoe. Don't you tell mamma that, because she will scold papa and make him cough."

Estelle tried not to smile at these frank domestic revelations.

"Won't papa scold you?" she asked.

"I don't think he will—not much," said the child; "not if I give him lots of kisses."

"Why is your sister not with you?" Estelle asked next, as she walked on slowly, with the child clinging round her neck.

"Mamma took Bessie with her. They are gone a long way. Bessie is mamma's pet," was the answer.

"I can see papa," she suddenly cried out, pointing to a stooping figure seated on a bench near the end of the avenue.

"Keep still, dear, else I can not hold you," Estelle exclaimed, for the little one had started up in her arms, and was stretching forward eagerly, crying,

"Papa! papa!"

The figure turned. It was the gentleman whom she had seen enter the house muffled up in the tartan comforter; the owner of the bad cough she heard at night, when she sat alone in the drawing-room after her mother was gone to bed.

He rose, hearing the little one's repeated cry, and came towards them, folding his newspaper and crushing it hastily into his pocket. He came on with the inquiring uncertain air that very near-sighted people have; came on quickly, and then stopped to cough, leaning on his stick. And Estelle, coming closer with her little burden, saw, with a sudden flash of recognition, the man whom she had loved years ago; the man for whom she had once counted it gain to wait a lifetime.

He bared his head with a look of courteous inquiry. He was very bald, and his hair was gray. The mouth was too compressed. The old expression of patient waiting was gone, replaced by lines of sour disappointment, of weariness, of disgust even.

She stood and looked for one instant. Could this be the man she had loved so dearly when she was Estelle Russell? He did not seem to recognize her. She explained briefly how she had found the child; the little one also putting in her word, to ask if the lady might go home in the carriage with them.

As Estelle spoke, a look of half-recognition passed over her old lover's face. It softened a shade or two, as he said:

"I can not express how much I am indebted to your kindness. I had no idea what trouble my poor little girl was in. Maudie, I hope you thanked this lady." Then with a look of uncertainty—"I am distressed at the fatigue you have been put to. May I know to whom I am so much indebted? My wife—Lady Vivian—will call and thank you." Then the old hard look came back.

"This is the lady who lives up stairs," the child broke in.

"I am Madame de Montaigu," said Estelle simply. "I am staying with my mother, Mrs. Russell, on the second floor at Maison Labadie. I shall be happy to make Lady Vivian's acquaintance."

"I think we knew each other some years ago," said the baronet. "I was Louis Vivian when I met you."

His voice trembled a very little, and his face softened for one instant, and then grew hard as iron again.

"I beg a thousand pardons for allowing you to hold this child, but the fact is—I am not—I fear I should not be able to hold her for one moment. Might I ask you to carry her as far as the nearest seat? The carriage is waiting at the entrance of the park. I will call one of the servants to relieve you of your burden. As you have already been so kind, may I beg you to stay with Maudie till I return?"

He turned away and was lost among the trees. And Estelle, who had at first been so taken by surprise that she had accepted every thing as a matter of course, now had time to wonder over it all. That the man whom she had known as plain Louis Vivian should be in possession of carriage, servants, and a title, seemed strange enough, but that he should be the husband of Julia Maurice was tenfold stranger. Strangest of

all, perhaps, that they should have met in this manner.

She was sorry to see him so terribly aged, so visibly soured. She had hoped that he would forget her and marry some one who would make him as happy as she might herself have done, had she been allowed to follow her own inclination.

One look in his face was enough to show that her hope had not been realized. She would never have believed it possible that Louis Vivian, whom she had known and loved as a brave fighter against adverse circumstances, could come to this; Sir Louis Vivian prosperous and miserable!

"It is very sad," she thought to herself. "I did hope he might have found a congenial wife. Well, he need not have married her unless he had chosen. That is one advantage men have over women."

A powdered footman wearing the Vivian livery appeared before very long, touched his hat respectfully, and took Miss Maude up in his arms.

"Sir Louis is coming up that walk, madame," he said, speaking, under the impression that Estelle was a foreigner, very distinctly, and rather louder than was quite necessary. "Sir Louis is extremely sorry to keep you waiting, but since his last attack he daren't walk fast against the least bit of hill."

Estelle hesitated for one moment. Sir Louis would, of course, wish to drive her home.

Should she accept or refuse?

She tried to consider what she would do if he were a mere stranger under the same circumstances. It was but an act of simple courtesy on his part to offer his carriage after the service she had rendered.

It might seem churlish if she refused. There was no need of being churlish, certainly. They were both married, and there was an end of it. If she refused, he might think—men *are* so vain—he might think—any thing. And that would never do.

"You had better carry Miss Vivian on by the path Sir Louis said he would take," she said, walking on in front herself.

Five minutes later they were rolling up through Place Grammont towards Maison Labadie. Sir Louis did not attempt to talk, nor did she. She felt tired; and did not choose to talk common-places about the weather and the scenery either, to this man; who, whatever he had become in mind and temper, however he had chosen to shape his life, had been once upon a time her faithful lover, whom for two years she had nightly committed to God's holy keeping.

Lady Vivian's pony equipage stopped the way in the courtyard of Maison Labadie, and they had to wait till it drove off.

"Mamma will be angry because I have lost my shoe," Maudie began to whimper as they got out.

"Nonsense!" said Sir Louis. "Mamma will not be so unreasonable."

"If Bessie had lost hers, mamma wouldn't mind," the child persisted.

"I can not have you talk such nonsense, Maudie," Sir Louis rejoined sternly, looking very much annoyed. "Carry Miss Vivian up to the nursery," he said to the footman.

"Who in the name of wonder was that woman in black you had got in the carriage?" was

Lady Vivian's first question, when her husband, after taking a courteous leave of Estelle—with perhaps a dash of formality in it—entered the drawing-room.

Sir Louis was out of breath. He went to the nearest sofa and sat himself down before answering.

"Can't you answer?" her ladyship continued, without looking up from her occupation. She was arranging a bouquet of lilies in a vase, and was quite deaf to the sound of her husband's hurried breathing. She was accustomed to it, probably.

"Louis! I want to know what woman this is that you've picked up?"

"A woman whom you will have to thank for picking your child up," Sir Louis replied coldly.

"Picking Maudie up!" Her ladyship's face was not pleasant. "I might have known something would happen to her when I let her go out with you!"

"Well, tell me what did happen, at any rate," she continued, seeing that Sir Louis was silent again. "Where is Maudie?"

"Maudie is quite safe in her nursery." And then he gave as much of an explanation as was necessary to satisfy his wife of the propriety of her calling upon Madame de Montaignu.

"Well! to think of her actually being in the house with us!" was her ladyship's exclamation. "Russell, Montaignu. It must be the same."

"Same what? Did you know them?" He knew that she knew them well enough.

"Why, the same people I was staying with at Toulouse, years ago. How I did hate Mrs. Russell, to be sure! Estelle was a soft little creature that couldn't say 'bo' to a goose. I tried to stir her up to rebellion, but 'twas no go. Her mother made her marry young de Montaignu, a French dandy whom she had taken a fancy to. La! How that unlucky child did cry the night before her wedding, to be sure!"

"Cried, did she?" said the baronet, who had laid himself down among the sofa-cushions with his back to her ladyship.

"Cried! I never saw any body cry like Estelle. Buckets full was nothing to it, I can tell you," said Lady Vivian, laughing. "I used to shed torrents when I was a girl, too: but mine were absolutely nothing to hers. To be sure, I never cried except after I had been in a passion."

Sir Louis, just then, gave something between a gasp and a groan.

"What's the matter?" said his wife; "are you ill?"

"Thank you, no. A little tired."

"I dare say you have been overwalking yourself, as usual. I suppose I had better go and thank Madame de Montaignu to-morrow. How very odd it is, her being here. I should have no objection to take her up again, you know, but I wish she were not with that horrid mother of hers. I hate Mrs. Russell. I'd have helped Estelle to marry—or to communicate with—the man she was so fond of—she never would tell me who—just to spite Mrs. Russell."

"I wish to Heaven you had," the Baronet ejaculated, with his face in the cushions.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FEMININE DIPLOMACY.

It was very odd indeed, Lady Vivian thought, as she dressed for dinner that evening; quite comical, this meeting of Estelle and her mother. She resolved to be civil to Mrs. Russell, to be patronizing, if the shadow of an opportunity presented itself. For she had not forgiven Mrs. Russell's lectures to her on lady-like behavior, nor her conduct in that matter of the elopement; although, as she told herself, the greatest kindness Mrs. Russell could have done her was to bring her back as she did. If she had married Harry Russell, what a terrible mistake it would have been! He was but a lieutenant still, and that escapade happened seven years ago. And she—was Lady Vivian.

Sir Louis sat silent and ate nothing. Her ladyship did not condescend to take any notice of him. She understood good cookery, and her palate told her that the dinner was irreproachable. If her husband did not eat, it was probably for the same reason that he did not speak. He was "in his sulks." He was so often sulky now that she never noticed it. She went her way—he his. She came to him later in the evening. He was at his writing-table, surrounded with books and papers.

"You are not coming with me, I suppose?" she said, drawing on her gloves.

He looked up wearily. There was no sign of pleasure in his countenance as his eye fell on her. Yet people said she was a splendid woman. She was a trifle altered from what she had been when Julia Maurice, naturally. The double chin was more developed, the down on the upper lip more strongly marked; in short, she was quite a full-blown beauty now—a wife, men said, of whom any husband ought to be proud.

Sir Louis, however, did not look proud of his wife. His voice expressed nothing but the coldest depth of indifference as he answered her question.

"No, I am not going to to-night."

"You had much better rouse yourself, instead of moping to death among those stupid books and papers. It's very tiresome for me, having always to go out without you."

"You can stay at home if you please."

"I dare say!" returned her ladyship. "I don't want to be moped to death either. And it isn't so very amusing to hear nothing but the scratching of your pen all through the evening."

Sir Louis made no reply.

"So you won't come?" said his wife, when she had finished buttoning her gloves.

"No." And then he added, feeling that his answer was of a discourteous brevity, "I do not feel fit for going out to-night, Julia. I am very weary."

"You shouldn't overwalk yourself," she returned.

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

She went half-way down stairs, and then stopped and turned. She was thinking whether she would go back and kiss her husband. She had more than half a mind to do it. She went back to him. He was leaning his head on his hands when she entered.

"Is any thing the matter with you?" she asked, going up to him.

He looked up. "No," he exclaimed. "What should there be the matter, more than usual? Why do you ask?"

"Would you wish me to stay at home with you, Louis?" she said.

"Not on any consideration," he exclaimed. "Do you imagine for one moment that I wish you to mope yourself to death on my account? Pray go to your party and amuse yourself."

He spoke with some irritation. She repented having taken the trouble to come up stairs.

"I won't offer to stay at home again in a hurry," she said, as she walked out of the room, leaving the door open purposely to annoy her husband.

Sir Louis turned, smiling a bitter smile as he quietly rose to shut out the draught. He shivered and coughed, and at length threw down his pen and drew near the fire. What did he see in the embers he stared at so intently?

Not much that was pleasant, to judge by his face.

Lady Vivian was disappointed in her hopes of patronizing Mrs. Russell. Mrs. Russell was no more to be patronized now than she was seven years ago. There are some people who can not be patronized, and she was one of them. I can not imagine even a duchess patronizing her. Certainly it was a thing not to be done by a baronet's wife.

The silver-haired, peach-cheeked little lady saw Lady Vivian's abortive attempt, and smiled gently at it, as she lay back on her downy cushions.

She did not like my lady one whit better now than when she was plain Julia Maurice. Perhaps she liked her still less. For, although she had been glad enough to hear that that dangerous young woman was married, and thereby precluded from drawing her son Harry into her toils, the pleasure of the news had been materially lessened on learning that the bridegroom was the very man whom, as a struggling barrister, she had rejected for her own daughter. For Lady Vivian, it was quite enough to feel that she was disapproved of by any one for her to take a dislike to the individual. She felt now that Mrs. Russell disapproved of her. Along with her courteous speeches and her drawing-room smiles, there was a certain frigid undertone which reminded Lady Vivian that Mrs. Russell had not forgotten Julia Maurice's offenses. But in spite of this latent antipathy between the two ladies—and on either side it was strong enough, though unconfessed, to have kept them wide apart—it so happened that each had in view the intention to make use of the other.

Lady Vivian had discovered that Mrs. Russell was well acquainted with some noble Englishwomen, who for reasons of health had been staying the winter at Pau. These ladies were the leaders of a certain set in London from which Lady Vivian, in spite of her riches, in spite of her beauty, in spite of her undoubted popularity, had hitherto been excluded. But people who come to Pau can not bring their "set" with them; consequently society there is to a great extent a sort of conglomeration of many sets. Late as it was in the season now, Lady Vivian resolved to leave no stone unturned to get an introduction to these ladies through Mrs. Russell.

Mrs. Russell on her side had discovered that Sir Louis Vivian was an intimate friend of the

then first lord of the admiralty, and her mind had instantly fastened on the idea that he might be brought to use his interest for one or both of her sons. With this object in view, she, with scarcely an effort, put aside all her dislike to Sir Louis's wife; and Estelle's announcement that she did not intend to be intimate with Lady Vivian was received with strong disapproval.

"I can't understand you," Mrs. Russell cried. "That escapade of hers at Toulouse never did you any harm. You are Comtesse Estelle de Montaigu at last, though you have had to wait so long—and—"

Could it be possible, she thought, that Estelle still preserved some lingering sentiment for her *ci-devant* adorer? Was it for that she disliked the wife?

"I am sure," she said, aloud, "your husband is excessively fond of you."

"It is because I think my husband would disapprove of Lady Vivian that I wish to see as little as possible of her," replied Estelle quietly.

"Now I do call that sheer nonsense," said Mrs. Russell. "She goes everywhere; indeed, in some circles she quite sets the fashion. She is rather fast, I admit; but it's very much the fashion to be fast just at present. Of course, if she had ever gone beyond a certain limit, I should say to you, 'Cut her dead.' But she is a clever woman, my dear. She just keeps within bounds. She will never do any thing that might by any possibility lead to her exclusion from Court. Now you know how very particular the queen is; and while Lady Vivian continues to attend all the drawing-rooms, you and your husband may be quite sure you are safe in knowing her. And, even supposing she were not well looked upon at Court, I really think family feeling might induce you to be civil."

"Family feeling!" said Estelle, bewildered.

"Yes, certainly. Why, didn't you hear," cried Mrs. Russell, raising herself on her couch, "didn't you hear Sir Louis say Lord — was a great friend of his?"

"Lord —? Well?"

"Why, don't you know—I declare you are becoming as ignorant of home affairs as if you were a real Frenchwoman—don't you know Lord — is first lord now? Don't you see that it is of the greatest consequence to Harry and Alfred to have friends on both sides? If the present ministry resigns, I should not want Sir Louis, because then my own friends would come in; but as long as this government continues in office, Sir Louis may be useful—most useful. It is wonderful what a difference it makes to men in your brothers' profession, the having friends on either side. All the years I have been living in England," Mrs. Russell continued, sinking back on her cushions, "I have thought of nothing else. All my energies have been bent towards making friends who might be useful to my dear boys. Ah! they will never, never know how hard I have worked for them! You don't enter into my feelings, Estelle. I believe you have not a spark of ambition in you. As for me, if I could but live to see Harry an admiral and darling Alfred captain, I should die happy."

"Oh, mother, mother," Estelle cried, "I do understand, I do enter into your feelings! Have pity on me!" she cried, weeping, bitterly. "Do not say such hard things. Have not you your

two sons, and am not I left childless? robbed of my one, my only one?" And she wept on, and would not be comforted.

Mrs. Russell herself caught the infection of tears. "It was the will of Heaven," she said at length.

"It is easy to say that," returned the daughter, "but it does not make the sorrow easier to bear. However," she continued, with quivering lips, "I do not like you to think that I am quite indifferent to my brothers' interests because I am married and settled in France; and I am sure Raymond would not wish me to be so. I will do nothing to offend Lady Vivian. How far my civilities are to go, Raymond himself must decide. He was always most particular about our acquaintance when we lived in Paris."

And when next Estelle wrote to her husband she asked him the question—how far he wished her to be civil to Lady Vivian. To make it clear why she thought it necessary to ask, she was obliged to remind him of Julia Maurice's attempted elopement with her brother Harry. She saw that affair now under a very different aspect to what it had borne seven years ago. She understood now what small regard Julia Maurice must have had for her own reputation. She had been long enough in the world to know how warily, in all times and places, it behaved a young and beautiful woman to walk; and Julia's recklessness seemed to her not the recklessness of the girl who did not know, but the recklessness of the woman who did not care. Apart from all this, she felt herself completely antagonistic to Lady Vivian as Lady Vivian. She felt herself shrink from her, with her air of insolent prosperity, her affectation, her carelessness of every thing not immediately affecting herself. As to the past, she could not throw blame on Julia without giving her own brother an equal share. Her cheeks burned as she recalled the hissing of Raymond's voice the only time he ever called her brother "*scélérat*." From tenderness to Harry she toned down her expressions in recalling that miserable, silly affair to her husband's recollection. Still, there the bare fact remained of the attempted elopement; and she secretly hoped that that would be enough in itself to make Raymond disapprove of a renewal of the acquaintance.

But to her surprise, Raymond wrote as follows: "You are right, my Estelle, in thinking that our feelings are the same in this matter. Were we together in our sweet home in Paris, able to pick and cull our society, I would say, do not receive this lady into our circle. But we are not in Paris, that charming retreat of social liberty. We are divided; you attending on your mother, I on mine. And sometimes—be it said by-the-by—madame's exacting temper makes me almost glad you are not with me; though, were you here, I know, dear love, how many allowances your innate kindness of heart would make for her fits of irritability. Poor woman! she thinks, alas! that as countess dowager she will be treated with less consideration by her children. In all the improvements I am gradually introducing into the management of the estate, I grieve to say she only sees symptoms of Anglomania; and she talks as if Montaigne were her kingdom, and she its forcibly deposed sovereign.

"I thoroughly appreciate your mother's wish to keep up a connection which may be useful to

her sons. The only thing which could for a moment make me regret my own nationality is, that I can never be of the slightest service to either of my brothers-in-law in their profession. I can not suppose, my Estelle, that your mother, whom I have every reason to love and esteem, would wish for any friends whom it would ill besecm my wife to know. As for congeniality, I can quite imagine Miladi Vivian an uncongenial acquaintance to you. But then, how many women have I seen equal to you in refinement of mind or manner? I can not call to mind even one! Your intercourse with miladi is neither more nor less than a sacrifice of your own private feelings to the good of your family. Be it so. It can not be for very long, dearest.

"And that brings me to the query, when shall we be together again? I trust Madame Russell's health improves. Do not let her imagine for one moment that I wish you to leave her before she is completely restored. Heaven forbid that my wife should be a less devoted daughter than she was when I took her from her home. I beg of madame to accept my devoted homage. I would willingly join you at Pau or elsewhere. But my mother declares she can not do without me; even with Hortense, who, however, begins to find our monotony tell upon her spirits. And in truth, *mignonne*, it was high time I took an active hand in our affairs; for during our residence in Paris, in spite of my mother's sharp eye, my father's intendant contrived to cheat shamefully. I have put a stop to all such doings, and have got a new intendant who promises well, and will doubtless do well as long as he is looked after."

"I am glad your husband sees the thing in a proper light," was Mrs. Russell's remark when her daughter informed her of the tenor of Raymond's letter.

CHAPTER XL.

LADY VIVIAN'S MORAL CODE.

ESTELLE was surprised to find, by the time spring was half over and Pau was becoming deserted, how very intimate she and the Vivians had become.

She was angry with herself for having allowed the intimacy to spring up, and yet on reflection she felt she could scarcely help it. Truth to tell, in spite of Mrs. Russell's eagerly expressed wishes, the acquaintance had died a natural death but for Lady Vivian, who had from the first chosen to take good care to improve all her opportunities of intercourse with the inhabitants of Maison Labadie. She had discovered that Comtesse Estelle could be quite as useful to her as could Mrs. Russell. Comtesse Estelle had the *entrée* into all the best foreign society of the place. Lady Vivian did not care for foreign society, but having heard that it was difficult to get an introduction—that the residents drew back from the acquaintance of mere visitors of a season—she determined to be introduced into what she called Estelle's "set," and succeeded. It can not be said that she shone very brilliantly amongst the *élite* of the Basses-Pyrénées. She made herself conspicuous by her bad French truly; but so have many Englishwomen before and since, who have been pardoned notwithstanding. But the men thought

miladi "fast," and translated their thought—they may have found a word for it by this time—by that indescribable shrug and smile and lifting of the eyebrows which speak so plainly of utter disesteem. So with the women. They asked where was the husband of miladi. He was sick, he was melancholy, he had the spleen, that heritage of all well-born Englishmen, and was consumptive besides. Then why did miladi not stay at home to nurse him and cheer him up, instead of displaying her white shoulders at balls?

Miladi disposed of her husband very quietly. Alone! Oh dear no, she never left him alone. Fortunately two old friends lived in the *appartement* above theirs, and as one of them was in bad health, and, like her husband, unable to bear heated rooms, they made a point of spending the evenings together when she was out.

It was most fortunate their being close to these old friends, for her physician had insisted that she was not to mope. She had all her life been accustomed to a whirl of society. Pau, said she with a flirt of her spangled fan, Pau, my dear madame, was stagnation itself. Not that she regretted having come. No. When a husband's health is concerned every thing must be sacrificed—every thing; even the dear children. She knew she ought to have left darling Maudie and Bessie at home, but their father insisted on their coming, although the heat of the climate was known to be too great for them. What could she do? A sick man has his whims, and this was one of them. She never complained, but she was distressed for her little ones; and so on.

To hear Lady Vivian, you would have thought her a pattern wife and mother. These pretty speeches were for the public, French and English; she never made them to Estelle. On the contrary, she seemed to feel that Estelle's having already known so many of her private sentiments in old days enabled her to dispense with all disguise now. In her moments of expansiveness she confessed many things to Estelle which that young lady would rather not have heard, and which, when she did hear them, she did not love Lady Vivian the better for.

"Marriage is a lottery, as you know, my dear," her ladyship would say. "We have both found that out. I married for position. My heart was elsewhere, as you may remember—for I bethink me of certain foolish confidences made long ago—ah, well-a-day! But I felt that, situated as I was, I had no right to listen to my heart. I knew how exceedingly my sisters would be benefited by my making a good match.

"Poor things! Papa is gouty, and mamma is rheumatic, and they see little society indeed unless they come to my house. I did think Sir Louis would be fonder of me, I confess. He is never positively unkind, you understand, dear, but oh, such an icicle! However, one must make the best of one's bargain; 'tis for better for worse, and whenever Sir Louis is more than usually sulky, I think that, after all, poor Herbert might have been as bad, and worse, for he had an awful temper. And, as I said, in my position I can do so much for the girls."

Estelle might dislike Lady Vivian's candor, but she strove to give her full credit for all the sisterly devotion she laid claim to. She knew that it was possible for a woman to be admirable as a sister, and admirable in no other relation of life.

She did not know that Lady Vivian's sisterly affection showed itself principally in making over to Lizzie, Lucy, Emily, and Clara, the dresses and ornaments which she had worn through one season, and which were not sufficiently worn out or old-fashioned to be passed over to her maid; and that she never invited them to her house in London or to Vivian Court unless there were people also invited—scientific and literary friends of Sir Louis—whom she did not think it worth her while to amuse. Of Henrietta she saw scarcely any thing. They moved in totally different circles, she would inform her husband, when he complained of her never inviting Dr. and Mrs. Vandeleur to dinner. For Henrietta was Mrs. Vandeleur now. Before the two years had quite passed over, the doctor had married her and taken her to his home. And although the baronet's wife had sneered her very worst, Henrietta had never repented her marriage with the hard-working London physician. Her home was a happy, peaceful one. Many an hour did her brother-in-law pass in her little drawing-room, when his own house was turned upside down by some fête, *matinée musicale* or otherwise, of his restless wife's. Well would it have been had her ladyship's vagaries ended in such *matinées* and *soirées*. But Sir Louis had far other and graver sources of discontent. Long before the honeymoon had waned, he had discovered that the beautiful creature whom he looked upon somewhat in the light of an impetuous child, did not care for him, but had merely married him to share his title. But the mortification of this discovery was as nothing to what he experienced rather more than a year later, on finding by accident that Captain Waldron's visits at his house were become the talk of the clubs: that bets were given and taken as to the length of time her ladyship would take in making up her mind to brave disgrace for the sake of the handsome soldier. Sir Louis Vivian staggered, rather than walked, into his wife's presence after hearing this horrible gossip. He knew she did not care for him, he had made up his mind to that; but she had a child, an innocent baby. If she was dead to all wifely affection, could she not at least remember that she was a mother? If she was prepared to cast away her own good name, at least let her pause for the sake of her poor baby's. Had she thought, he asked fiercely, how that baby would be pointed at in after years, as the daughter of—of a woman who had disgraced herself? Good God! That it should have come to this, he cried. Had he not done his duty by her? Had she any reasonable cause for discontent? Was she not able to gratify every whim? And Heaven knew their name is legion!

Lady Vivian was startled and silent at first, for it was a new thing to her to see her husband in a passion. But she presently recovered herself, and defied him to his face. The first heat of passion over, Sir Louis felt how utterly useless it was to prolong a discussion with a woman unreasonable at all times, and now roused to anger. He felt, too, that it would have been wiser had he waited till he was able to speak calmly and temperately. It was possible, he thought, relenting, that she had only been thoughtless. She and Captain Waldron were old friends and relatives. She was new to London life, and did not know how careful a young wife should be.

Something of the kind he attempted to say, by way of an apology for his hasty words. His wife rejected both the apology and all subsequent attempts at reconciliation. She forced him to see that the further they were apart the better she was pleased; and Sir Louis desisted at last in disgust. But Lady Vivian—although the rule of her life was never to allow any one to put her in the wrong—although she chose to defy her husband in words—saw clearly that, since people had begun to talk, Captain Waldron was better out of the way; and accordingly intimated that the captain's visits must cease. She would have no correspondence, not she—was the answer he got to a piteous request that he might be allowed to write to her. There were too many servants about. She did not choose footmen and lady's-maids to be prying and conjecturing and—who knows?—carrying stupid tales to her husband perhaps.

"You may run up now and then when you can get a day's leave," she said; "but I'll have no writing. If you write, I shall return the letter unopened; give it to my husband, perhaps, to inclose to you! How would you like that, Monsieur Herbert? No, we live too much before the world. We are to be good friends always, of course; but I won't have you even so much as give me a look that may compromise me. And you can stay away altogether, if you choose," she continued, in reply to some remonstrance of the captain; "and the very best thing you could do, if you are really as devoted to me as you say, would be to marry, and ask me to your wedding. That would shut people's mouths. I tell you I don't choose to be talked of except as a woman who leads the fashion. Why shouldn't I go to your wedding?" cried her ladyship. "You came to mine, didn't you? Herbert, I have no patience with you! You are too great a spooney!"

Yes, Captain Waldron averred, he was a spooney: that was the right name for a man who let himself be played with as she had played with him. It was like a cat playing with a mouse, he said, with a bitter laugh. Her ladyship cut short his reproaches and dismissed him. And he went his ways—cursing himself, Fate, Lady Vivian, and all things in creation; and feeling half inclined to marry Lizzie Maurice, for pure pique. Lady Vivian had taken care never to provoke a repetition of that first scene with her husband. His reproaches had galled her sorely, but she rather respected him for the anger that had prompted them. However, another cause of complaint arose, and gathered in magnitude as time went on. One of the strongest resolutions—almost the only strong one—Lady Vivian had made before her marriage had been that she would never allow herself to run into debt. But her wants had increased with her position. Gradually she found herself so much involved that she was forced to apply to her husband. His horror and distress were tenfold increased by the knowledge that he gained at the same time of her untruthfulness. It was the old story: the cooked accounts—misapplication and misappropriation of moneys, which had been her habit when keeping house at Wenbury. Sir Louis carried this grief to his mother; the other he had kept to himself. But when he poured forth this trouble to her, and found the relief it was to unburden himself, a strong prompting came over him to

tell her all. He forbore. Julia was the mother of his little ones—his Maudie and Bessie; and for their sakes he kept silence. Mrs. Vivian saw that something remained untold, but did not press him. If he chose to tell her—well; if not—well. In spite of that one consummate act of folly—his marriage—she clung to her darling old belief in her son's wisdom, and made an idol of that wisdom still. She had long seen that some unhappy secret lay on his mind: that his life was empty and weary, in spite of the press of work of all kinds with which he surrounded himself. That his wife contributed in no way to his happiness and comfort had been plain to her from the very first. Many and bitter were the tears Mrs. Vivian had shed since the beginning of her son's prosperity. Many were the times when her spirit had risen in indignation at the small estimation in which his comfort and well-being were held by her daughter-in-law. She kept silence, at her son's entreaty. For when on one occasion she had declared in the height of her maternal wrath that she would speak once for all to Lady Vivian, and find out whether she were lost to all sense of consideration, Sir Louis had raised his head from the mantel-piece—they were in Mrs. Vivian's little drawing-room at Vivian Court—"Mother," he said, "for my sake keep silence, now and always. If ever there is a scene between you and my wife, you will have to leave this house: she will make you, mother, whether you will or not. And that, I think, would go as near to break my heart as any thing could in this world. I am ashamed to have to say so to you, dear mother; but I know—I know that she would be glad to see you go. I know that if once she could bring you to a quarrel, she would say, 'Either Mrs. Vivian leaves this house or I.' And what could I say then? I married her, you know, mother; I took her for better for worse. And there are the children, too," he added, with a groan. "Stay with me for their sakes, if not for mine; the poor little things are so fond of you. But you must keep quiet, if you stay, dear mother," he went on with a piteous smile. "You must let me come and sit by your fire and tell out my grievances as they come, and never mind. Won't it make you more inclined to keep the peace with my lady when I tell you that the only comfort of my life is to get to this corner of the house, where I know she—where, in short, I am sure of being quiet as long as I stay?"

Yes that was true enough, Mrs. Vivian admitted. Lady Vivian never troubled the dowager's apartments with her presence; and, as Sir Louis had said, would have been delighted at the smallest pretext for making Mrs. Vivian quit her comfortable corner; which pretext the widow had as yet not given either in word or deed. She could not be complained of, or at any rate turned out of Vivian Court, because she kept silence; so silence she resolved to keep, and did keep, for her son's sake—albeit, as time went on, and she saw more and more of the levity of her daughter-in-law's character, she would debate much within herself whether it were not her duty to speak. Lady Vivian, who fondly imagined that her flirtations were always kept within due bounds, would perhaps have been somewhat astonished could she have known how lightly Mrs. Vivian regarded her, how totally without surprise she would be at any shortcomings of her daughter-

in-law. But my lady went her ways, as became her light nature, and never troubled her head as to what might be the secret thoughts of the widow in her quiet nook at Vivian Court.

And so they went on till Sir Louis, suddenly falling ill, caused the breaking up of the household. Mrs. Vivian would have come abroad too, to nurse her son. But no, Lady Vivian was determined to have no mother-in-law spying out her actions on the Continent. She spoke out her mind plainly when Sir Louis expressed his wish that they should all travel south together.

"Mrs. Vivian has her rooms at the Court," she said; "let her keep to them. I never heard you say that it was provided she was to travel with us wherever we went; I know, at least, that it was not so arranged in the marriage settlements. You and she may agree about it as you like, only let me know in time, because if she goes I stay at home with the children, and so I needn't have my dresses packed."

Her ladyship knew that her husband would not part with the children. That hint about their staying with her gained her her point quite easily.

"Why must women hate each other so?" Sir Louis murmured, feebly, when he repeated Lady Vivian's words to his mother. "You must stay behind, mother; it can't be helped. I hoped it would never have come to this; but so it is, and I'm beaten, as I told you I should be. You see I can't leave her behind and take the children and you with me; and she knows that. And perhaps I ought not to leave her behind, even with the children. She is a handsome woman, you know, mother, and has always been much admired, and so on. And we had better be together, I think. Though what I shall do without you I can't imagine; especially as now that I'm so out of sorts I shall want to grumble more than ever."

Mrs. Vivian's eyes filled with tears, few and bitter. She was getting old, and yet she saw, looking tremblingly forward, the possibility of her only son dying before her. Truly, in such a case, the tears of old age are the very waters of bitterness.

CHAPTER XLI.

NEW THOUGHTS AND OLD MEMORIES.

ALL that lonely winter Mrs. Vivian's sole comfort had been in her son's frequent letters. Sitting by her fire, while the west wind roared in the tops of the fir-trees, she read them again and again as eagerly as if she had been a young woman, and the letters love-letters. As the winter passed, she became gradually aware of a different tone in his communications. There was less apathy, less querulousness. Lady Vivian's name was rarely mentioned, and though there was no lack of information about the children, and messages in plenty from them, there was full discussion of other topics; whereas formerly the children's sayings and doings, much as they interested Mrs. Vivian, had often filled the paper more entirely than was agreeable to her. Now, as spring approached, her son's letters seemed to take the old tone of former years. There was less in them about his own health, and more about his own thoughts and doings; and through-

out them there ran a strain of calmness and hopefulness which sent a glad thrill through the widow's heart. God, she thought, bending her head reverently, had at last heard her unwearied prayers; her only son was given back to her. She had sometimes felt ungrateful, nay angry, at that gift of riches which had brought so many small crosses with it. She remembered such repinings with sad compunction now. For what indeed would have become of her, had not her son's wealth enabled him to take Dr. Vandeleur's advice and winter abroad, where the nipping east winds could not touch him? He would have died; Dr. Vandeleur said so. And she, miserable, would have been left to moan and tear her gray hair alone.

Yes, alone. For *that woman*—so she spoke to herself of her handsome daughter-in-law—that woman would make no moan for her husband. In all the widow's fears for her son, in all her sorrow for his apparently frail tenure of life, indignation at Lady Vivian's heartlessness was largely intermixed.

If her darling son Louis died, thought Mrs. Vivian with an angry flush on her withered cheeks, that woman would not care, any more than if he were a piece of worn-out furniture that must be consigned to the lumber-room. If she wept indeed, her tears would be crocodile's tears, dried as soon as shed.

She, the mother, would have to mourn alone. To her would fall the task of keeping the memory of their father green and lovely in the children's hearts—not to Lady Vivian.

But now she put away these sad forebodings. Her son was taking a fresh lease of life, and she could dry her tears, thank God, and take courage.

A change there was in Sir Louis for the better, both in mind and body. As for his renewed health, the climate accounted sufficiently for that. As for the change in the tone of his mind, he was ignorant of its cause, and, if he thought about it at all, had laid it to the account of renewed bodily vigor, till one day his consciousness was suddenly sharpened by a chance word, and both cause and effect stood out clear before him.

It was thus.

Lady Vivian was out, and Sir Louis was spending his evening in Mrs. Russell's drawing-room. A quiet friendly evening it had been, like the many that had gone before it. Mrs. Russell on her sofa as usual, her daughter working by her side; he, reclining in an arm-chair, speaking or keeping silence as he chose; so without restraint had their intercourse become by this time.

Estelle's head had long bent over her work; she had been very silent, he fancied, all the evening. She had, in fact, been making her arrangements in her own mind; had been wishing—she was getting tired of wishing—that her husband would come to her before she and her mother left Pau. She would not ask him, however; she remembered with a slight stirring of her blood that letter of his, the first that had ever made her angry; that letter in which he had besought her to be patient and "reasonable." Unpleasant as it was to travel even a short distance without his accustomed escort, she determined within herself that nothing should induce her to ask him again to leave Toulouse on her account, or for her own mother's convenience. Her mother's health was

improving; she would be able to do without her by-and-by. Let Madame de Montaigu make much of her son for the time she would have him all to herself. Such had been the tenor of her thoughts during the long silence that Sir Louis had wondered at. So long it seemed to him at last, that he was on the point of addressing her with a question on some English book he had lent her, when she suddenly looked up and said,

"We are going to leave Pau in a few days. I suppose Lady Vivian will be at home some time to-morrow afternoon;—mamma would like to call and say good-bye to her."

All the blood rushed to Sir Louis's heart at those few calm words. Going? An end to those quiet, pleasant evenings?

With a great effort he answered Estelle as calmly. "I think my wife will be at home. I will tell her." Soon afterwards he took his leave, and descended to his own part of the house.

But not to sleep. Long after Lady Vivian had returned from her party, and had dismissed her tired maid, did he walk up and down, up and down, like one possessed; fighting—but how weakly!—with his own heart.

He knew it all now. The light of revelation had broken suddenly upon his blind ignorance. That strange, blessed quiet, that indefinable sense of well-being which had taken hold of soul and body, suave, soothing, and impalpable as the air he breathed—all, all was the effect of her presence. In such harmony might his life have glided onward all these years, had she been by his side instead of another.

This hint of approaching departure had opened his eyes. But for that he might have lived on and on; unquestioning, content to be because she was near. For it was the same Estelle, and yet not the same. The black robes, the drooping head, the calm self-possession of manner, all this belonged to a stranger. Only when he listened without looking at her did the girl Estelle come back to him unchanged. The sweet voice, the slight hesitation at times for an English word, the foreign idiom and foreign accent, all this went to make up the identity of the Estelle he had loved and lost. Fool that he had been! he cried aloud, clenching his hands in impotent anger; fool to think it possible he could be near her, and not love her! What of the change in her? What of her mourning robes? What though her head drooped, and her once lovely eyes had grown dim with weeping? What of all that, and more? He might have known that, alive or dead, fair or faded, she never could be less to him than the elect of his heart. There had her shrine been, never to be filled by another image as long as that heart beat.

He confessed all this to himself, expecting no return. At no time had he dared contemplate such a possibility; and now that he knew her other self—the woman that had grown from a girl of fair promise—the belief was stronger in his mind that he had become less than nothing to her, and that her husband was all in all. Perhaps the secret of the intensity of his worship lay in this belief. Pain as it was to look back and think of what might have been—of that perfecting of his life which could never be—he hugged the pain as if it were pleasure, because with it came the thought of her transcendent goodness, of her perfect guilelessness, of her unimpeacha-

ble loyalty to her husband. He was not a man worthy of her, perhaps. Who could be? Had he himself been worthy to possess that perfect pearl?

He answered himself sadly in the negative.

What had his life been, alas! since he had lost the hope of calling her his own? A poor, mean, patched-up life, full of small aims and perfunctory work; full of chafings and repinings at the inevitable; full of useless scorn and still more useless anger. Could she have spoken, was that the life she would have bid him lead?

No; a thousand times no.

And this life of his, so full of small discords, had been resolved into perfect unison through her. Her presence had brought harmony and rest with it.

Must it all end? he asked. Must the old clash and jangle return to madden him? It could not be. He tried to shut out the very thought.

He could not harm her; she was as one of God's angels to him, and as far removed from the jar of earthly strife.

He resolved that, wherever she went, he would endeavor to follow. Farther he did not look; only to be near her was what he craved. As for harm to her or to himself, the longer he thought the more he scorned the idea. Why, was he not on better terms with Lady Vivian? Had she not somehow lost her strange knack of ruffling him, since the beginning of those pleasant evenings in Mrs. Russell's drawing-room?

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"We are going to Biarritz, and perhaps I may take a run into Spain, just for the sake of saying I have been there," said Lady Vivian when Estelle and her mother went to make their adieux.

Mrs. Russell said something polite about meeting at Caunterets. She must stay there at least three weeks for the baths. She should have much pleasure in thinking they might meet again; which meant exactly nothing. But Sir Louis had written to the first lord of the admiralty about Harry Russell, and therefore Mrs. Russell bound herself over to practise all possible civility to his wife.

"Sir Louis is a particularly well-read man," Mrs. Russell observed to her daughter one evening when they had been about a week at Caunterets: "I miss his evening visits greatly. He quite makes up for his wife's silliness."

Estelle did not answer for a moment. Then she said coldly; "I thought him rather prosy sometimes."

"Prosy? Oh dear, no! What can you be thinking of?"

"His English politics, mamma." And as she spoke, she felt the blush, which had dyed her cheeks when she first answered her mother, rising from cheek to forehead.

"You are become so very French, you know," replied Mrs. Russell, stifling a yawn behind a French newspaper. Estelle rose suddenly and left the room.

Why did she not choose to confess that she missed the baronet's society? Why had she given utterance to that lie? For a lie it was; she knew that as soon as she had spoken.

True, she had been accustomed to the society of clever men ever since her marriage. True, also, that Sir Louis Vivian's frequent visits had supplied what had been an unacknowledged daily

want, ever since her mother's health had so far improved as to be no longer a pressing anxiety.

But although she had missed the clever talk she had been accustomed to, she had never missed the talkers. And she did miss Sir Louis.

How much? she dared to ask herself.

How much? she dared not answer.

She rose and stood before her glass—stood scanning her face, with self-contempt written on every feature.

"So!" she said at length, as she turned away.

"So! I miss him. I? Is it come to this? And he is not my husband, nor my brother, nor my lover; but just simply a man who wanted very much to marry me a long while ago, and who lost no time in consoling himself with Julia Maurice. I wonder whether he did love me so much, then? It could not have been very deep love, or he would never have married that flirt. And I remember how he spoke once of English flirts; and I, poor little fool, felt so pleased that I had never flirted, and that he knew it!

"And now what matters it what he said or thought? What right have I to remember any thing that concerns him? I have my husband who loves me—if not so well as he did once, at least as well as I deserve—"

Then her tears began to fall, for she remembered her boy, and the thought would force itself upon her that it was only since the boy's death that her husband's love had grown colder. Often during that winter, as she sat alone in the drawing-room after she had read her mother to sleep, had that thought intruded; but dimly, not putting itself into words. Now many little things gave it a clear shape, made it tangible enough for her mind to take hold of and not let go.

Mrs. Russell had more than once thrown out hints of Raymond's wish for an heir to his title. She had judged simply from her great knowledge of the world, not from any thing Raymond had ever said. But Estelle felt that her mother did know the world, and that the fact of her possessing such knowledge made her an infinitely superior woman to herself. And so the little, lightly uttered hint had had its weight, had sunk down into her mind, and was bearing its fruit, although she had told her mother what she truly believed herself, that Raymond was not like other men. Lady Vivian, again, was a woman who knew the world, better perhaps than even Mrs. Russell. And she had expressed the same opinion in plain words as regarded herself, adding with the candid air which it was her habit to put on when she was going to say something especially unpleasant: "You'll find it so yourself, my dear, if you have not found it out already."

Estelle had almost hated her for making that speech. She would have written then to her husband to beg him to come to her, only she could not bear the idea of a refusal like the last. "No," she thought, "I will do what he tells me; I will be patient and wait. I know he will come as soon as his mother becomes quite unbearable."

And, still thinking, it occurred to her how like Lady Vivian's domestic behavior was, in some respects, to Madame de Montaigu's. Only Raymond could run away from his mother, and Sir Louis, poor man, was tied to his wife. And then pity for him rose pre-eminent, as it had done many a time before, when there had been those unmistakable symptoms of a storm in the Vivian

household which rendered the position of a spectator so unpleasant. But she stopped herself. She was angry with herself for her pity. She would not—she had no right—to pity him, or to speculate how he could have yoked himself with such an unequal helpmate. It was no business of hers.

And now she took a solemn vow that she would never willingly meet Sir Louis Vivian again: that there should be no communication on her part with Lady Vivian; though the latter had suggested their taking several excursions together in the course of the summer. It was a comfort to remember that Sir Louis's demeanor had been uniformly calm, rather cold than otherwise.

"I know he is very proud, too," she thought: "so proud that he would resent my pity. I'll stifle it. Why should I pity Julia Maurice's husband? Supposing she does not care for him, why, no doubt, he got accustomed to that long ago."

* * * * *

The days that followed were days of feverish restlessness to Estelle.

She rose before the sun had appeared above the mountains; she took long walks, sketch-book in hand, before her mother was dressed. She read aloud for hours together without allowing a sign of weariness to escape her. She anticipated every wish of her mother's before Mrs. Russell had time to express it. She sang little songs to herself as she worked. Habitually a silent woman, she now even counted her stitches aloud. All this strange bodily activity was forced on her by her steady resolution not to think. She hated herself that her thoughts had gone so far already. She longed for something—any thing, no matter what—to happen, that might turn the current of her mind in some safe direction.

She had her reward. The something came before long in the shape of Raymond's long-delayed new book. Estelle read it through with avidity. Most of the pieces she had known before, though only in their more or less unpolished state. Here they were as gems, well cut, well set.

Sitting with her husband's book on her lap, she could let herself fall back again into her old daily attitude of stately quiescence; could think, though with strange minglings of pleasure and pain, of the sweet hours she had passed in her pretty Paris boudoir, with her boy's arms twined round her neck, and Raymond by her side; could remember the long talks over a line, a word; the scratchings, the blottings-out; and, alas and alas! the clapping of hands and the tiny ripple of childish laughter when, after much cogitation and pulling of his mustache, "papa" found the right word, and abandoned the blurred page to "jolie maman" to copy out fairly. Sweet, sad, wholesome memories! Amongst these she could safely linger, although they made her tears flow.

CHAPTER XLII.

MADAME WILL BE LADY PARAMOUNT.

BEFORE the enjoyment that Estelle felt in the perusal of her husband's new book had yet lost its freshness, came Raymond himself, unexpectedly, bringing with him divers papers and magazines containing criticisms of the poems, favora-

ble and the reverse, for his wife to criticise in her turn.

Never had Estelle been so glad to see her husband; never till now had she fully realized the void of separation. She clasped his hands, she clung round his neck, saying again and again:

"I have wanted you so much—so much!"

Her warm welcome brought out Raymond's brightest look to replace the settled air of weariness that hung about him. It was good to know his wife had not learnt how to do without him, he said, caressing her hand—an old habit of his—as they sat side by side.

Mrs. Russell, after submitting meekly to be thrown into the background for one day, told them laughing that she felt herself one too many, for that they behaved more like a bride and bridegroom on their wedding tour than like old married people.

Those few terrible days, full of a consciousness of something indefinitely wrong, seemed like the remembrance of a bad dream to Estelle, now that Raymond was come back. Now she could enjoy the mountain scenery fully and freely as she rode by his side up the steep paths. If now, she thought, Raymond would but stay with her, as long as she was necessary to Mrs. Russell's comfort!

It was not at first—for the remembrance of that one galling letter stepped in and jarred upon her pride; only after her husband's reiterated expressions of content and full enjoyment, that she ventured to put her wish into words. She felt as though there were a change of some sort in her husband. Or was it in herself?

Both, perhaps; she could not tell. She only knew that she hesitated before asking the seemingly simple question, that her voice faltered, as it had done when she had ventured a shy request during the first few months of her married life.

Raymond's answer came gayly—

"I am not going back in a hurry, my little wife. Take that for granted, and let us enjoy ourselves. I feel as if I had entered Paradise after being in—the other place."

"His mother has been quarrelling with him, of course," thought Estelle, turning away her head to hide a smile. It had always been so, and would be so long as madame was—madame.

Mrs. Russell, too, was glad of her son-in-law's visit, and showed her pleasure in her own way.

"You have roused your wife, my dear Raymond," she said. "Now you are here she is quite a brilliant little personage. You have roused me too, and I am much obliged to you for it. I was getting as stupid as an owl."

"You an owl, mamma?" cried Estelle.

"Yes, my dear," Mrs. Russell replied—she knew that her son-in-law considered her a very clever woman—"yes, my dear, a perfect owl. There was a pair of us, for you were no better than I. We did nothing but yawn and blink at each other all day. We bored each other I suppose. That is why we are so glad to see Raymond."

Raymond liked his mother-in-law sincerely; perhaps because he was aware how strongly she advocated the non-intervention of parents with young married people. He was sorry that he had not seen more of her, and said so, adding:

"It does seem a pity that you should be living a solitary life when there is the château,

which would hold three large families without the slightest inconvenience. I am sure my wife would be the happier if you could make up your mind to take up your abode with us."

Estelle looked up quickly, but said nothing. She feared the conjunction of the two mothers-in-law. And Mrs. Russell laughed inwardly at the recollection of her first and last battle-royal with madame about the baby's caps.

"You don't know what you are asking," she said; "or, tell me, are your plans changed? You think of keeping up your Paris establishment? Because I might see you there sometimes; I might get rooms close to your house."

With regard to Paris, Raymond said, he was undecided. He wished for nothing less than to sink back into a mere country gentleman; at the same time, he was deeply sensible of the evil of absenteeism, more particularly in his own case, as he had introduced numerous improvements into the management of the estate which he could not hope to have properly carried out unless he himself were there to insist on the entire obedience of the several subordinates. By-and-by, when he had proved his steward's capabilities and fidelity to his employer's interests, he might venture to return to Paris; but scarcely till then. He was translating an English treatise on agriculture, for which he much wanted Estelle's help. He meant to introduce the same system of drainage as therein advocated. He meant to have a model farm such as there did not exist in all France.

"From poetry you turn to farming! How will your wife like that?" asked Mrs. Russell.

"I think he won't be the first poet-farmer," said Estelle, blushing prettily, and thinking what a genial way her husband had with him; how clear and practical he was, and how self-denying to contemplate giving up Paris and looking after the management of the estate in Languedoc instead. All in the tenants' interest too; for, of course, these new-fangled improvements would necessitate the outlay of a large sum of money.

"Well, Raymond, I am sure I wish you success," said Mrs. Russell. "And I doubt not you will succeed; you are always so energetic about what you undertake. Who knows but the emperor himself may be asking you to show him over your model farm one of these days?"

"If he did, I'm not such a rabid Republican but that I should show him over it with a great deal of pleasure," was Raymond's answer.

In such harmless talk they were whiling away a hot afternoon, when the post came in, bringing a budget for Mrs. Russell and for Raymond, and nothing for Estelle, who sat by, looking at the two as they read.

One of Mrs. Russell's letters seemed to give her unmixed pleasure. She looked up, and was about to speak, when Raymond suddenly started up, exclaiming, "This is too bad!" All the geniality was gone from his face: instead of it there was a frown of deep annoyance.

"This settles about our going to Paris," he said, giving his wife the letter. "You see I dare not go even if I wished it twice as much. I can not even venture here but orders are disobeyed in my absence. I must get back again immediately. So ends my brief holiday," he said, with a sigh.

"Always madame," thought Estelle, echoing the sigh, as she read the letter which had caused

her husband's annoyance. It was from the intendant. The poor man wrote in a great dilemma. The countess dowager had taken upon herself to order the discontinuance of certain works, and had in person dismissed the workmen. The intendant dared not enforce M. le Comte's orders unless he had M. le Comte's written authority for doing so; for Madame la Comtesse insisted that she had a certain interest in the estate, and that M. le Comte could not carry out any alteration without first consulting her.

These works which madame had thus taken upon her to interrupt, Raymond explained to his wife, were simply good stone walls which were in course of erection on a certain portion of the estate traversed by the high-road. Ever since this road had been in existence the fields on either side had been rendered almost valueless by the depredations of the flocks of sheep turning aside to graze when on their way to or from the high pasture-lands. These walls were a terrible innovation on the old-fashioned, time-honored boundaries, the ditches so easily crossed by the thin, hungry sheep. And worse than their being merely new-fangled—so it was represented to the conservative comtesse—they would be the means of taking the bread out of the mouths of those half-idiotic peasant boys and girls whose existence, said the villagers, had no aim other than the guardianship of the said ditch boundaries.

"The fact is, the Almighty must have made them just on purpose for that, you know," said one peasant, whose cretinic offspring lay groveling by the ditch-side all day long, either slumbering or begging from the few passers-by; while the sheep grazed and the shepherds rested under the low bushes.

It was to put an end to this shiftless state of things that Raymond had resolved on the boundary-wall, already half-completed when he left Montaignu for Cauterets. He had not informed his mother of what was being done. He had ceased speaking to her of any of his plans, finding that if her opinion was asked, or a plan simply discussed in her presence, a storm was the inevitable consequence. It had always been the consequence in her husband's time, unless she could have things all her own way. That could not be allowed now. It was necessary, Raymond felt, to make her feel that the estate was his, not hers. What she was mistress of, besides her own estate in the Basque country, was the *appartement* on the ground-floor at the château, with a certain portion of the garden contiguous thereto; her suite of rooms at the hotel in Toulouse, and stable-room in both town and country for her carriage-horses.

Mrs. Russell had left the room, true to her principles of non-intervention.

"No Englishman would be such a fool as to stand such interference," she thought. "My boy Harry wouldn't, for one, although he is as fond of me as any son could be of his mother." And having thought thus much, she dismissed the thing from her mind as being no affair of hers, and consequently not requiring any mental exercise on her part.

"Is it really necessary that you should go?" Estelle asked, when she had read the intendant's letter for the second time. "The man asks you to give him an order to proceed with the building in your own handwriting. Surely if he felt that

that would not be sufficient, he would have asked you to come yourself. And he does not ask that. Why not try writing first, Raymond? If you once go, something or other will be sure to happen to detain you."

Raymond was undecided. He felt reluctant enough to go, he said; reluctant to meet the storm which he knew awaited him at the château. He thought he would wait and see what a letter would do, and sat down and began one. Then he read the intendant's letter again, and felt more undecided than at first.

"Would it not," said he, "be unseemly were I to make my mother of such small esteem as she most certainly will be after my sending this letter?"

"It would be her own fault," said Estelle.

"I know that. She has no vestige of authority, no interest in the property. It is as absurd for her to contradict my orders to my intendant as it would be were she to contradict the orders you give your maid about your own dresses. She richly deserves humiliation, but I can not bear to humiliate her. I think I had better go instead of writing. She will storm at me, of course; but I shall make her listen to reason afterwards."

"Why not try writing to her as well as to the intendant?" Estelle asked. "I have not had you for so long, Raymond, that your going away for this seems almost cruel. What is it, after all? Two or three fields spoilt by the sheep breaking in. Well, it has been so ever since the road and the fields and the sheep have been in existence. Why not let it go on for another year; or let the matter go till we return to Montaignu together?"

She laid her hand entreatingly on his shoulder, and her head drooped over it as she spoke. Raymond's hand rose to clasp hers and gently stroke her cheek. She thought she had persuaded him to stay. Both were silent for a moment. But during that short space his purpose had become firmer.

"Do you not think I would willingly stay?" he asked. "But I have at heart the improvement of my property, and I ought not to shrink back as if I feared any opposition that starts up at the first small change. Were I worthy else to be the possessor of Montaignu? Duties must be met, not shirked, dear wife."

"I know," said Estelle. "But still, after having been separated from you so many months, your going away thus is hard for me to bear. I would go back with you, Raymond, only I don't think mamma is quite well enough to be left yet. And if she were, it would seem very unkind to leave her on such short notice."

"Persuade her to come with us."

"It would be no good to try. You heard what she said."

"She might change her mind, as other ladies do."

"Mamma never does; and I don't see why she should in this instance. If we were in Paris, we could live very near each other, as she said. And you would like that, Raymond, for you two never clash, although you are mother and son-in-law. But oh! Raymond, why can't we live alone somewhere, even in Languedoc? Why can't I have you all to myself? Why can't we have a little house just big enough to hold us two? Raymond, if you only knew how I have envied the

people who live in small houses and have no spare rooms!"

"Inhospitable *châtelaine*! But I understand you, little wife. Truly we have been happiest when most alone. But such halcyon days are over, love; we could not desert the château without giving offense on all sides."

"People chose to be offended when we went to Paris, but they got over it when they found you did not care."

"But then I was only the heir-apparent, and they thought me an *enfant terrible*, after the manner of heirs-apparent; and all such are forgiven. Now I am the reigning monarch, and my mother is a dowager, a nobody. That is why I wish to practise all possible consideration towards her. Would you have me spoken of as being a bad son to a widowed mother? Such an accusation would stick by me for life. No, it must not be."

Estelle would have replied, but Raymond rose, saying,

"My mind is made up; I shall go this evening. Travelling by night will be pleasant as well as gain time."

"To lose you in this way just for the sake of a few miserable fields!" cried his wife, with tears in her eyes; "just because madame interferes and contradicts at every turn! I see how it will be. As long as she lives you will never dare leave Montaigne for a single day. It is very hard upon me, Raymond. Do you think I have enjoyed myself this winter? Do you think any earthly thing would have kept me away from home except mamma's health? I have felt miserable without you!"

"Have I been happy, do you think, *mignonne*?" was Raymond's reply to this outburst. "Let us say no more about it. I have taken the pleasant paths in life hitherto. It is gradually dawning upon me that every man *must* walk over a certain amount of rough road. You would not have your husband such a coward as to try to avoid the rough bits in his path, would you?"

What more could she say after that? She was silent, feeling angry with herself for having said so much. She was not given to plead; she would at any time rather give up a point than coax her husband. She despised women who talked of coaxing their husbands to do this or that. But now, for almost the first time in her married life, she had brought herself to plead for a thing, and the pleading had been utterly vain.

She rose, and left the room lest she should betray her vexation. She wished to get rid of the choking in her throat before she spoke to him again. Never more, she vowed to herself, would she ask him to pursue any one course more than another for her sake.

Raymond was too much preoccupied to observe the vexation his wife tried to hide under an appearance of calmness. He was vexed himself at having to go back, and was pondering very deeply how he should contrive to make his mother understand that her interference must cease, without trampling too much on her pride.

When Estelle had ordered dinner to be an hour earlier than usual, she had done all there was to do, and could sit and brood over her disappointment without interruption.

At dinner Mrs. Russell said:

"My letters this afternoon were pleasanter than yours, Raymond. I hear from Harry that

he is appointed to the *Petrel*, with orders to proceed to the coast of Ireland. He wants to run down and see me, but there will be no possibility of his doing that. He says he owes the appointment entirely to Sir Louis Vivian's interest with the first lord, and has written to thank him. I must do the same. To know that my dear boy is getting on in his profession is quite a renewal of youth to me."

Raymond's eager congratulations covered Estelle's silence.

"And this Sir Vivian," he continued, "is the husband of that eccentric demoiselle Julie, of whom you wrote to me. Is it not so, my wife?"

"Sir Louis Vivian," said Mrs. Russell, with a smile at Raymond's mistake, and an emphasis on the word Louis.

"Yes, it is the same," Estelle answered; she had seen her mother's smile at Raymond's French mistake, and felt considerably nettled by it. Her annoyance showed itself in her reply. "I am not at all so sure as mamma seems to be that Harry owes his appointment to Sir Louis Vivian. A man does get promoted sometimes for merit alone, and I should be sorry to think that all the captains in the English navy had got their command through interest with the lords of the admiralty."

"Truly, Harry has always had first-class certificates," said Raymond. "You are right, Estelle; it is pleasanter to think of his getting his command through merit alone. However, *ma belle-mère* may be right. I know nothing of the way in which the English navy is managed."

"Oh, as for that," said Mrs. Russell, "Harry has merit enough to carry him to the top of the tree. But really in our navy there are so many deserving officers that all can not expect promotion. And I shall therefore believe, with Harry, that Sir Louis Vivian's kind word has got him his promotion, unless Sir Louis denies having tried to do any thing for him."

"Well, *ma belle-mère*, if this monsieur has really used his interest for my brother-in-law, I for one shall feel grateful; and if you think it necessary to show any civilities, command me as far as I am able. I am an Anglomane, you know, and am always glad to be civil to my wife's compatriots."

"I do hope, my dear Raymond," cried his wife, "that you won't think of inviting these people to Montaigne!"

Raymond looked up in surprise at her vehemence. "Ah, I forgot," he said, "you do not approve of *mlladi*."

"No, I do not indeed," was her reply.

"Really, my dear Estelle, you are very severe," said Mrs. Russell. "I don't quite like Lady Vivian myself, but I can tolerate her. Don't set up for a dragon, my dear, or you will never get on in society."

Estelle was on the point of saying she would rather not get on at such terms; but suddenly stopped herself, and sat silent with a burning blush that Mrs. Russell mistook for anger at her reproach. It was not anger, but shame. Who was she, she thought, that she should be intolerant of Lady Vivian? In the sight of Him who knew the innermost workings of all hearts, which was the worse woman of the two?

It was a relief to her to hear carriage-wheels, and rise up from table to see from the balcony

whether it was the travelling-carriage for her husband.

Raymond followed her. It seemed to him as if things were not quite pleasant between his wife and her mother. He had, at least, never before heard Estelle's voice betray so much annoyance in speaking to her mother. He felt all the more sorry to go; but there was little use in being sorry now; there was the carriage, and his valet had already brought down his travelling-bag, and was making his adieux to Lisette.

"You will promise not to mope, dear wife," he said, bending over her as she leaned on the railing. "I fear all the nursing you have had this winter has tried your nerves. You must get some riding. I observed you were always more like your old self after a ride with me."

"I shall not care about riding without you," she replied. "I can imagine nothing more tiresome than riding up and down the mountains with a guide behind one cracking his noisy whip. That indeed would try my nerves."

"But, *mon Dieu!* surely you will meet some of your winter acquaintances here, with whom you might ride. This Vivian family, for instance. If the husband is *poitrinaire*, they will surely visit Caunterets."

"I do not care to ride with any one except you," was the answer.

"Well, please yourself, dearest." He would have said something about his returning to Caunterets if possible, but felt, on second thoughts, that it was best to be silent about such possibilities till he had seen his mother. But he did not know himself how sorry he was to leave his wife till his servant came with a message from the postilion that it would be well for them to get down as far as Argèlès, before nightfall.

The last farewells were therefore spoken hurriedly.

"I shall be back at Montaignu as soon as ever mamma can spare me," said Estelle as her husband entered the carriage.

"Try to persuade her to come with you."

"It would be perfectly useless, so I need not attempt it," was her answer, as the carriage drove off.

She stopped for a moment, looking after it with a strange sinking of the heart. Then Lisette came down with a shawl, and a message from Mrs. Russell that Madame la Comtesse would take a chill if she exposed herself to the evening air bareheaded. So she had to return to the drawing-room lest her mother should be vexed, and complain of the strange disregard she manifested for her health, urge the duty of carefulness, the danger of chills, and so on. Then there was the old round of reading and working to make the evening pass. It had to be done, therefore she did it, and listened to her mother's happy talk of Harry, her outbursts of delight, and gratitude to Sir Louis, and her wonder whether he would interest himself about Alfred too. Estelle sat listening to it all, and answering when an answer was expected. But it was treadmill work, and when at last she laid her head down on her lonely pillow, it was with the feeling that she would not be able to bear many days like the one which had just passed, and a longing, that was becoming intense even to pain, to be back at Montaignu, where she could sit and look from her window at her boy's grave, shadowed by the waving acacias.

For, besides the fear which possessed her now, that as long as she remained with her mother she would be liable to come in contact with the Vivians, there was the terrible gnawing pain that a childless mother alone can feel when she hears a mother's rejoicings over her living sons. As their sister she could listen with pleasure, nay rejoice, as her mother did, in Harry's and Alfred's success. But Mrs. Russell, naturally enough, considering that it was long since her daughter had lived under her roof, had fallen into the habit of speaking of them as "my sons," instead of "your brothers." So that every time the conversation turned upon either—and that was many times a day, for Mrs. Russell's love for her sons was her only passion—Estelle was cruelly reminded of her own childlessness.

It had always been hard to bear, and now every day was making it harder. All her powers of endurance seemed failing, and, now that she wanted it most, her husband's love.

"Alas! If God had but spared me my little one!" was her cry as she wept herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"FACILIS EST DESCENSUS."

THERE must surely be some fatality pursuing her, Estelle thought, when, on her return from a sketching expedition to the grange of Queen Hortense, she found Sir Louis Vivian sitting with her mother.

"I thought you were quite settled at Biarritz," was her exclamation, as he rose and came forward. This was not a very courteous greeting, she felt, and as soon as it was spoken she knew Mrs. Russell would take her to task by-and-by for her ungraciousness. But she was resolved that nothing, not even her mother's displeasure, should make her give utterance to one word that could be construed into welcome.

Her manner froze up Sir Louis most effectually. Biarritz was too exciting, he explained, as he walked back stiffly to his seat; and the children were not quite well: so they thought a change desirable, and knowing Mrs. Russell to be at Caunterets, was an inducement to come there instead of trying Luchon or Bagnères.

Mrs. Russell then went on with what she had been saying when her daughter entered, and Estelle made out that the Vivian party had the suite of rooms next theirs, and that Maudie and Bessie were at that moment asleep in her own room.

"I was terribly afraid of damp sheets," Sir Louis explained in an apologetic tone to Estelle. "And they were so tired, poor children, after so many hours in the carriage, that Mrs. Russell insisted upon their taking possession of your bed. She assured me you would not mind it. I hope it will not inconvenience you very much."

His manner was so painfully constrained as he said this, that Estelle felt she must soften her own for humanity's sake.

"If you could but have seen how tired poor little Maudie was," he went on, "and so good, so fearful of fatiguing her mother and myself."

"Mind! How could you think I should *mind* their being in my room? You don't know how I worship children!"

She did not dare trust herself on that theme.

A moment spent in walking across the room to get a glass of water from the *carafe* to wash her sketching-brushes, helped to restore her composure, and she was able to ask for Lady Vivian in her usual voice.

"Quite well, thank you. I believe she is dressing for dinner," said Sir Louis, who was watching every turn in her face, and wishing he had not mentioned the children.

"I think I will go to her," Estelle said when the brushes were washed. She wanted an excuse to leave the room, and she knew there was no fear of her being stirred to any of the softer feelings, be they right or wrong, by any thing Lady Vivian might say. As she left the room, Mrs. Russell said to Sir Louis—

"That poor child's dying was a terrible blow to her, poor thing! she seems to feel it more instead of less. An only child, too; heir to such a fine property."

Sir Louis could not trust himself to answer for a moment. He took up Estelle's sketch-book, and began turning over the leaves. Presently he said in rather a husky voice: "I would give much not to have awakened those sad recollections. I ought to have considered— Would it be any use to take the children away now? I—I really don't know what to do about it. I would not have *them* give her pain for the world."

"Don't distress yourself," said Mrs. Russell kindly. "She would be distressed at your disturbing the children. Sad to say, the sight even of a mere beggar child will sometimes affect her strangely. It can not be helped, you know; the only cure for these things is time."

"Ah! Time: time indeed," ejaculated the baronet doubtfully.

Mrs. Russell went on: "She is very fond of your little girls. She used to sit and watch them at play, and appear quite happy as long as they were to be seen, long before we knew that we were living in the same house with you."

"Ah!" said Sir Louis, "poor thing!"

And then Mrs. Russell, talking of sons, deftly contrived to lead the conversation back to her own sons; a topic which, as we have said, she was never tired of airing, and to which the baronet proved an admirable listener.

Lady Vivian was making an elaborate *demi-toilette* for the *table d'hôte* dinner. She gave Estelle a light kiss, and remarked that she was dreadfully sunburnt.

"I went out riding every day with my husband while he was here," Estelle explained; "and no veil is a protection in this hot weather."

"Oh, your husband has been here, has he?"

"Yes. He was obliged to leave me on business; and I'm sure I don't know when he will be back," said Estelle, with a sigh.

"Humph!" said her ladyship, "that was a sigh indeed! Now I think you are to be envied." And therewith she plunged into her grievances. "Those men! I've no patience with them. Always meddling with what does not concern them! I wish my lord and master could be called to England on some very particular business, and kept there. 'Twould be a release I should be thankful for."

"I did not feel Monsieur de Montaignu's going a release at all," said Estelle coldly.

"Then you are lucky. Of all husbands in this world, I do believe mine is the most trying!

He'll worry me till I'm as thin as a thread-paper before long. Oh! if you did but know how he was going on all the time we were at Biarritz!"

"Perhaps he was more out of health than usual. Biarritz disagrees extremely with some people."

"As if the air of the place had any thing to do with it!" cried Lady Vivian. "This is what we came to loggerheads about: I wanted a governess. I have wanted one ever since I lost my English nurse. Well, I found a young person at Biarritz and had actually settled with her, when my husband quietly walks in and puts a stop to the whole affair, because he thought her accent defective. And he told me—yes, actually told me—that it would do me more good to look after the children than to be out on the beach all day talking nonsense! Well, I wasn't going to stand that sort of thing, you know," her ladyship pursued with increasing indignation, "and I told him that it would be time enough for me to devote myself to Maudie and Bessie when they came out, and if he wouldn't let me have a proper person to look after them, he might send them to school, or do governess himself. And he was so put out that he positively took me at my word, and has been teaching them, after a fashion, ever since! But that won't last long, I know. Children are a great tie and a great plague."

"How can you say such wicked things!" cried Estelle, with eyes opened wide in such wonder and horror that Lady Vivian, who was looking in the glass and saw the reflection of her friend's face there, turned round and laughed.

"You do take every thing one says so literally! But they are a plague: and boys, I believe, are worse."

"Really, Lady Vivian, I can not listen to you if you will talk in this strain," said Estelle, rising.

"You do amuse me, with your 'Lady Vivian,'" said her ladyship, laughing again.

Estelle was glad to escape to her own room, even at the risk of disturbing the tired children. She opened the window to let in the pure mountain breeze; it was doubly refreshing after the sickly odor of *millefleurs* which pervaded Lady Vivian's apartment. And truly the moral atmosphere in that room was none of the pleasantest, either.

How was she to help pitying Sir Louis, tied for life to such a woman? Had he been the merest stranger, had he been a poor peasant, she must have given him her pity in such woeful case. How much more when it was the man who had loved her once that had made such sad shipwreck of his life?

She had chosen to be critical; she had felt it safest for herself to keep before her his deterioration of character: evident enough without her seeking to see it, at times; and doubly irritating then.

But in the nature of things how should it be otherwise? Tied to a low nature, what should a man do but sink?

But oh, the pity of it, the pity of it! What might he not have become had he married a wife noble-minded enough to appreciate his nobleness, to uphold him in all that was good and great, instead of pulling him enviously down to the abyss of her own littleness!

This woman! Why, she had not even the brute

instincts of maternity. She considered her children a plague; she was always sending them away from her on the pretext of worry to her nerves; she never cared to kiss them save when they had a new frock on. Then she would turn them round, criticise the dressmaker's work, and dismiss them. She a mother, indeed! Truly the world seemed out of joint to Estelle as she turned to the bed where these little ones lay, longing yet fearing to stay the hunger of her true mother-heart with a kiss on their parted lips. No wonder their father loved them so dearly, she thought; since, for all the mother's love they got, poor Maudie and Bessie might have been motherless.

As the days went on, Sir Louis found himself watching Estelle; watching and wondering. For that a great change had come over her there could be no doubt. She carried with her no longer that delicious atmosphere of repose which, to his mind, had given her society its greatest charm. She seemed now almost as restless as Lady Vivian herself. She would organize riding and picnic parties; she would walk, or ride, or climb as indefatigably as a girl just out of school; leaving her party, tired and breathless, far in the rear. Then again, after making it appear that roaming up and down was the very essence of her existence, she would one day suddenly declare she preferred staying at home, and make every one go out without her. Sometimes Sir Louis would find her strangely perturbed by a chance word, either from himself or Mrs. Russell; then, again, from feverish agitation she would pass into a state of apathy from which nothing could arouse her.

Many a man would have ceased to trouble himself about a woman whose manner could be so icy as was Estelle's at such times. But, whatever her manner to him, Sir Louis never felt either hurt or offended by it—only sorrowful; taking it as the outward sign of some secret trouble which he was powerless to avert.

And so, by dint of watching her silently day by day, he got to imagine that he had the power given him of reading her face like a book. And, reading it thus, his sorrow turned into dumb anger; dumb, because it knew no adequate way of expressing itself; still less of remedy.

He read, as he thought—not that tale of old sorrow he knew of, which another child's kisses might drive away some time—no sorrow this for which mourning-robes are worn—something worse he read on her thin face. The story of a woman unloved by her husband—of a wife neglected, cast aside, yet loving still.

For he never thought but that she loved her husband. He supposed that she had got to love his as women do love their children's father. Not the best and highest love, he knew, but better than none; better a thousandfold than indifference.

Well for him if he had always thought thus. He might then have gone on his way comforted, believing that this pearl among women had found at all events that modified happiness which is the lot, mostly, of even the fairest and gentlest in this world.

But, being absorbed in the contemplation of what he believed to be the cause of her unhappiness, he grew, through the very fact of his brooding over it, to hate this Raymond de Montaignu,

whom he had never seen; and to think how crossly things had fallen out, and how dearly he, Louis Vivian, would have cherished her. How, even yet, supposing—ay, supposing!—both free, he would make her his own; how he would drive away that look of misery from her face; how, by the strength of his love, even the bare remembrance of that misery should vanish away.

In this mood the very sound of Raymond de Montaignu's name chafed him. And, because of that, he seemed to hear it on all sides; and, worse still, with words of praise attached to it by English and French, men and women. Surely, he thought, with increasing irritation, this rhyme-ster, dubbed poet in Parisian drawing-rooms, took up too large a place in the world's estimation. He was all that was most intellectual, most gifted; a man who might do absolutely any thing he chose, said Lady Vivian's French acquaintance. A phrase—the baronet's mental comment went—oftenest applied to the man who does absolutely nothing.

"A nice fellow, a capital fellow," said the one or two Englishmen who had succeeded in passing the boundary of Raymond's exclusive Paris circle. Very liberal in his views, and very fond of the English, said these islanders, feeling that no higher praise could be awarded a Frenchman. Had a nice, quiet, little English wife, which perhaps accounted for it, said one, willing to tell as much as he knew or supposed. She was at Cauterets, eh? Then really, you know, he must leave a card upon her. Monsieur de Montaignu was most civil when he met him in Paris.

Mrs. Russell, again, irritated Sir Louis beyond endurance. Not that she ever sang Raymond de Montaignu's praises. She had too much tact and good breeding for that, just barely remembering as she did—though she never allowed herself to think about it—that Sir Louis had once, before there was the remotest chance of his ever being Sir Louis, had the audacity to wish to marry her daughter. No, Mrs. Russell never praised the man who had found favor enough in her eyes to be made her son-in-law. But she spoke of him as women do speak of a man who has their approval, and who they know likes them. 'Tis a certain tone of voice they use.

And Estelle?

Strangest of all, this woman, with her misery written on her face, spoke of her husband as a woman speaks of the man whom she not only loves and honors herself, but to whom love and honor are due from all the world. Love she might, Sir Louis thought; for a wife's love is sometimes like the camomile, that grows the stronger for being trodden on. But honor? Well, perhaps she was but practising a pious fraud; bearing herself bravely in the world's sight lest it should pity her. It was noble conduct in her, but it made him all the more angry with her fickle French husband. Little by little he taught himself to think she would be less unhappy if she did not love her husband so much; from thinking this there was but a step to wishing it. In all this, so far as he knew, he was thinking not of himself, but only of her.

And so day after day passed, and Estelle had it on the tip of her tongue to beg her mother to leave Cauterets, and still she hesitated, and dared not speak for fear she might betray herself. For although her stay was slow torture to her, even

that were better, she felt, both for her own and Raymond's sake, than that Mrs. Russell should guess why Cauterets was unendurable. A little more patience, a little more fortitude, and Mrs. Russell would herself get tired of Cauterets and of the Vivians, and in the natural course of things Estelle would be free to return to Château Montaignu, and take up the smaller burden of a mother-in-law's persecution.

If Raymond were to come back? But she had no hope of it, and still clung to her resolution of never asking him to do any thing that put himself to inconvenience, solely for her sake, again. She did think sometimes, however, that, although her husband might be now less outwardly devoted to her than during the first years of their married life, there might yet be a kind of relief in his knowing her trouble.

She remembered his saying, when they had been married but a few months, that in trouble or perplexity of any kind whatever, husband and wife should take counsel of each other: that in the marriage state the possibility of perfect union was made null unless the possibility of a go-between were excluded.

If she had but taken courage then, and told him of her first love, it would not have grown into this terrible trouble and perplexity that was corroding her whole life. It was nothing else but trouble to her. Not for one moment did the knowledge that she loved Sir Louis give her a thrill of joy; nothing but pure misery.

She hated herself more and more when she felt herself wince at the sound of his hollow cough, of his toiling, panting breath, as he daily mounted the hill leading to La Raillère—hated and loathed herself because she began to know his footstep on the stairs, because her heart, in spite of herself, would leap up at the sound.

And—remembering her husband's perfect trust in her—the measure of her loathing, of her self-abasement, was filled to overflowing; so that she longed to get out of this world where she was so powerless against her own frail heart.

There was one faint ray of comfort. It was that Sir Louis did not know, and never would know, that she loved him.

Yet, fearing lest a chance word or look might discover her secret, and put her to unspeakable shame, and wearying of having to keep such constant watch over herself—how constant, how difficult, let those judge who have seen a woman treat her husband (there are a few such in the world) as Lady Vivian treated Sir Louis—she tried to live more and more alone. Allowed the privilege of intimacy, Estelle was subject also to its disadvantages. In default of another auditor, Lady Vivian would pour forth into her ear her endless grievances, and reiterate her assertion that the baronet was the most tiresome husband alive. Nay, my lady would even take the fag-end of her domestic wranglings into Mrs. Russell's drawing-room, to the annoyance of the latter, and to the silent distress of Sir Louis and Estelle.

"My dear people," said Mrs. Russell, on one occasion, when Lady Vivian's temper had mastered her politeness, "I am always extremely happy to see you, but if you wish to quarrel, pray defer it, or finish the evening in your own drawing-room; for mine, be it understood, is neutral ground."

"It takes two to make a quarrel," said Sir

Louis; and to do him justice, this was the first word by which he acknowledged that his wife ever did quarrel with him. It would have been more comfortable, perhaps, if these two had quarrelled frankly; because quarrelling has an end sometimes, although, of course, that does not prevent people from beginning again. But to a woman's nagging there is absolutely no end. Sir Louis knew that he should be nagged at for months for his having ventured to interfere about his children's governess. But where Mandie's and Bessie's welfare was at stake, he was proof against the weapons of his wife's tongue. Only, disguise it and make light of it as he would, he was deeply pained and mortified that Estelle should ever have been a witness of even the milder phases of domestic wrangling into which his wife had so indiscreetly initiated her.

Wishing to escape the chance of such unseemly exhibitions, Estelle would pass hours, with her sketch-book as an apparent motive, upon the crags and green slopes, where, thanks to her fleetness of foot, to Lady Vivian's laziness, and to Sir Louis's inability to mount steep ascents, she could feel secure against intrusion from either. She would have liked to have one of the children sometimes, but Lady Vivian had put a peremptory veto on such climbing excursions as involved the danger of getting sunburnt, and Estelle afterwards felt it was just as well. Had she begun to love the children because they were Sir Louis's there would have been a danger the more; and an insurmountable one, perhaps, which this present one was not.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ON THE GREEN ALP.

THE weather was becoming sultry even at Cauterets. The weatherwise had predicted thunder-storms for ten days past, but night after night a fog had descended on the valley, and rolled itself slowly back as the morning grew, showing a hot cloudless sky. Thunder-storm or none, Estelle felt that she must have an hour alone on the mountain-side this afternoon, for her fortitude was giving way, and solitude alone she knew would give it her back. Her mother was irritable, and that of itself was hard to bear. Mrs. Russell considered that her own irritability was quite atoned for when she had discovered that it proceeded from the state of the weather. "You look out of sorts yourself," she said to Estelle, "and I dare say it's from the same cause. I do wish we could have a good thunder-storm; that would clear the air and set both of us to rights again."

"I am out of sorts, as you say, mamma, but I do not think it is the weather," was Estelle's reply.

No, it was not the weather. It was Lady Vivian's behavior to her husband which made the young comtesse feel, as her mother put it, "out of sorts." Lady Vivian's behavior was the talk of—not the servants' hall: a more public place than that—the courtyard. There, her ladyship, her temper, her whims, and her extravagance were discussed by the couriers, the valets, the ladies'-maids, who congregated there to flirt and hear the news while the *table d'hôte* dinner

was going on. *Miladi* had had a fresh quarrel with Sir Vivian, and Lisette had heard all about it from her ladyship's own maid, and had retailed the news for Mrs. Russell's amusement.

"It appears that she had a scene, but such a scene as was unbelievable, with this poor Monsieur Vivian. He really is to be pitied, the lady's-maid says. He remained, as he always is, gentle and quiet like a lamb, and let *miladi* say on, without giving her a hard word back. It is not that he does not feel her shocking temper; it must affect his nerves dreadfully, for one of these scenes always makes his cough ever so much worse. Would madame believe that *miladi*'s debts are already eating up this poor man's fortune? She runs into debt time after time, and when he pays she never even says 'Thank you.' What a house that must be to live in!"

"That woman ought to be ashamed of herself," Mrs. Russell remarked in English to her daughter. "And Sir Louis is a man of much weaker mind than I took him for, else he would have learnt by this time how to keep her in order."

"Have I not told you, Lisette," said Estelle, turning to her maid, "that I dislike all gossip about people in the house? What is it to me what you learn from Lady Vivian's maid? I beg that I may hear no more such tales."

An English servant would have taken the rebuff in silence.

"*Hé, mon Dieu!*" rejoined Lisette, with the inevitable shrug, "I thought it might amuse madame. It is so dull here it makes one die. It is a pity they can not transport these springs to Paris, or even to Toulouse. *Mon Dieu!* I can not quit madame, that is certain; but how I shall rejoice when madame tells me to pack up! How madame supports this monotony I can not tell. Madame will not go to the balls because monsieur is not here; madame makes pictures and takes walks. And there are but two walks to take; first up the mountain, then down the mountain. One breaks one's back, one tears one's boots. Ah, how dreadful it must be for people who are obliged to live all their lives on the mountains!"

Mrs. Russell laughed heartily at Lisette's frankly-expressed disgust at the Pyrenees; and before she had time to think again of the sultriness of the weather, Sir Louis was announced, bringing the last number of the *Times* and a paper he was preparing for the next meeting of the Archaeological Society.

He was looking ill and terribly harassed. It was too true that he had had a fresh quarrel with his wife; or rather, that she had quarrelled with him because he had told her in a few words—and those few as temperate as his vexation could make them—that there must be an end to her extravagance in dress; that for the future he should make her a certain allowance, and require her to keep within it.

She to be allowed! She to be treated like a child! was Lady Vivian's exclamation. Her ladyship was like the horseleech, crying, "Give, give." She had felt a little, just a little, ashamed the first and second times her debts had been paid by her husband. Now she was callous. Money there was, and she would enjoy the benefit of it. Why should her husband have such an enormous balance at his banker's? Those Cornish mines were bringing in more every year. She knew that—no thanks to him, oh dear no,

he took care never to tell her any thing; it was in the papers, that was how she knew it. She supposed it was true; they didn't put all that about the mines in the papers, unless it was true, did they? Well, then, if the Cornish property was bringing in such great returns, why should not she enjoy a little of the money? She was not so unreasonable. Some wives would have insisted on a winter in Paris, or Rome, or somewhere; she merely wished to be nicely dressed. And it was most unkind, and unfair, and ungenerous—yes, she would say it—it was mean, mean conduct for a man who was so well off to grudge his wife's dressing according to her station.

It was to escape from such a tirade as this that Sir Louis Vivian betook himself to Mrs. Russell's drawing-room as soon as he found that his wife was deaf to his explanations of the exceedingly fluctuating nature of mining property in general, of these Cornish mines of his in particular.

"I shall leave you to your beloved English politics," said Estelle, as she tied on her broad hat and gathered up her sketching materials.

"Don't go far, for I feel sure we shall have a thunder-storm," observed Mrs. Russell.

"You will lose all note of time or distance in the ardor of sketching, and come back to us wet through," said Sir Louis. She answered, without looking at him:

"*Après?* I am not like the princess in the fairy tale, who was made of gingerbread, and lived in a house of sugar-candy." She tried to laugh, but the laugh died away from her lips. She dared not trust herself with him, dared not look at the face which told so plainly of the unrest, the perpetual striving and wrangling of the place mis-called home. She could have sat down and wept aloud, had she dared, when she thought of his name being bandied about in the mouths of the *canaille* of a hotel court-yard; bandied about with scorn or careless pity, or sneers—which was worst?—because of the wife who was doing her utmost to ruin him.

"At least take the road to Argélès," Sir Louis entreated; "so that, if the rain does come, we may send the carriage to meet you."

"Thank you; but I beg to say I don't believe in the rain or the thunder-storm either. People have been crying 'wolf' so long that I am incredulous. However, if I don't come back in two hours, and if the storm does come, mamma may send the carriage."

She went out of the house and down the street a little way; then stopped, undecided.

"No," she thought, turning back. "No; if the carriage is sent, perhaps he may come; who knows? I won't chance it. Better run the risk of a wetting." And she set her face resolutely to climb the hot, glaring path towards La Rail-lère.

There was a quiet grassy slope she knew of; a tiny alp, high above the Mahourat spring, where she had often remained undisturbed, when she had chosen, as now, to spend her afternoon alone. It was a long and tiresome climb, but was worth the fatigue for the sake of the eternal quiet that dwelt there. Resting on the soft grass, with her arm on a round, lichen-stained boulder, she endeavored to silence her uneasy heart, and to bring her whole being into harmony with the perfect nature-harmony of the lovely mountain nook.

The crickets on the alp had ceased their cry, aware of a new denizen in their world; from the fir-forest on the height beyond came the faint echo of the woodman's axe and the note of a late cuckoo; the air was sweet with the smell of boxwood and pine; below the place where she sat was a broad red patch of rhododendron, where the mountain-bees were humming.

"Ah," she thought, "how easy it would be to do and think right, if one's eyes and ears were never open to other influences than these."

Mechanically she opened her sketch-book, her usual refuge from painful thought. There, presently, her mind found full occupation in that ever-recurring difficulty with the sky. On the flat paper, the broad stretch of cobalt seemed coarse, raw, incongruous; looking up into the real sky overhead, there came upon her that feeling of despair every painter knows who has sat and gazed lovingly, till the unfathomable depths of pure blue half blind him with their bright intensity. The sky-difficulty acknowledged and regretfully passed over, she proceeded to the easier work of laying on the soft neutral tints of a stony foreground and brown and purple mountain; and while working at this, came back to her in a strange jumble of association her wish to see the gallery of the Water-color Society in London. It had been an old wish; not a very intense one, but still one which her husband would have gratified on the first distinct expression of it, during the time they lived in Paris. The truth was, there were things she cared much more for then. Now she found herself wishing this old wish again, and finding it of much larger proportion than it had ever held in her mind before; perhaps because of the strong necessity there was now of some other interest to balance that terrible one which was gradually absorbing her. Yet, in the face of that necessity, came the resolution of never asking her husband another favor. She set her lips firmly together as she thought how he had silenced her last request.

By-and-by, still working busily at her drawing, she fell back into the old girlish habit of dreaming and wondering, which had been broken during the happiest part of her married life. Only that now the dream and the wonder were not of the Future, which seemed so far certain as to exclude the possibility of being dreamt of in girlish fashion, but of the Past—irrevocable, it is true, but of which still remained the "might have been."

Would Louis Vivian ever have left off loving her? Was the theme of her misty retrospect. There was so little likelihood of his loving her now, that she did not feel, as she might, the utter want of wisdom in even vague speculation on such a possibility. Among the women she knew, it was a generally-received maxim that every man's love cooled sooner or later.

Raymond's love had seemed the one notable exception to this rule. She remembered how the intensity of his love had frightened her at first; then how proud and glad she had been of it, instead of wishing it less. And now—as the women said, sooner or later—late it was—but the cooling had come at last, and was as great, nay, a greater trouble to her now, than the trouble of that too fervent love had been then.

Would Louis Vivian have grown careless, too? Would he have left her for the sake of his im-

provements and alterations, for the sake of a verbal expostulation with an overbearing, interfering mother?

With this current of ideas, another idea mingled and stood out prominent in her mind: namely, that it behoved her to avoid Sir Louis Vivian as much as possible, and more sedulously than she had ever done yet. It would be difficult and disagreeable, almost impossible sometimes; but it must be done. She did not attempt to parley with that *must*.

She heard, when she had sat for more than an hour, an approaching footstep. The only human being who had ever found her out in this retreat was a poor idiot named Celestin, a creature whom it had been her habit to feed, as she would have fed a hungry dog, when she was at Cautelets with her mother the summer she had met Louis Vivian. The creature had grown up, and was fast becoming decrepit. For these outcasts, Nature's hated step-children, have neither youth nor manhood; their life drops at once from childhood to old age. Estelle carried bread and nuts in her pocket when out on her rambles, on the chance of meeting Celestin, for the creature understood the value of food, and would conceal it if not hungry when it was given him; but when alms were given, supposing that he put the dole into his pocket, and that the pocket was without a hole, it could be taken from him with impunity by the peasants not too idiotic to understand the value of *sous*.

He suddenly appeared from the opposite direction to that in which she had looked for him. She was slightly startled, for she had not known of any road reaching the alp except the one she had taken. He came and sat within a stone's throw of her, taking off his cap and grinning vacantly. She took out a roll of white bread and held it up to him; he darted forward, and took it gently out of her hand; then, hiding it in his bosom with a monkey-like gesture, went back to his former seat, and remained staring at her so long that she began to feel uneasy.

Another footstep. She looked eagerly in the direction of the sound, not sorry for more human companionship than the idiot's. The creature seemed harmless enough, but there was an eerie feeling in having him so persistently near and staring in such a lonely place as this. She looked at him; he was making ugly grimaces and picking furtively at his bread. The strange step came nearer, and presently, from the same opening in the rocks whence Celestin had appeared, emerged Sir Louis Vivian.

Her heart beat with two widely divided feelings; relief at the human companionship, and terror at seeing Sir Louis in a place which she had taken it for granted as physically impossible for him to reach.

"How did you come here?" was the only obvious question, as he stood beside her.

"I did what many a wise man has done; I followed a fool," was his reply. "I am rather out of breath. May I sit down?"

"Certainly."

What now had been the good of her strong resolution to avoid Sir Louis Vivian's society? Here he was, from no fault of hers, and how was she to escape? She began to wish that she had taken the road to Argèles, where there was no lack of passers-by from morning to night. She

looked at the idiot Celestin. He had moved away farther, and was gnawing his bread with the same monkey-like gestures over it.

She repeated her former question in a different form. "How did you find me out?"

"By asking. There were plenty of idlers at the hotel entrance who had seen Madame la Comtesse turn down the road to Argelès, and then for some reason or other retrace her steps, and take the path to La Raillère. Once beyond that point, it was not difficult to track you. I met the idiot, and spoke to him. I do not know whether he fully understood me, but we each made out that we were both looking for some one. I remembered this was the neighborhood of your old haunts, and followed him haphazard. I tied my horse to a bush just down below where the path seemed to terminate."

"Ah, then that accounts for your coming here at all. There is another path which I did not know of. You could not have climbed the one by which I got up here."

"No; probably not. I find the few steps I have climbed quite enough, I assure you," was Sir Louis's answer, as he drew a long breath.

"So I see, and I am sorry for it." She could say no more. She could not use such commonplace phrases as would have come uppermost had Sir Louis been merely an acquaintance; as, that his health must surely be mending; or that he looked better, every body said so. Such false commonplaces were impossible in speaking to the man whose health might have been, alas! the one dear care of her life.

"I observe you never miss going to La Raillère; I think you are the only person whom I have never heard grumble at having to go there twice a day," was her next attempt at conversation.

"I came for that purpose. It is only a question of time—only a question of time," he muttered, speaking to himself.

She bent forward to catch his words, supposing them addressed to herself. "Your recovery, you mean? I am truly glad to hear that."

"Recovery? No. Death, I mean."

He had not expected to see Estelle so startled. She turned pale, her hand dropped the paint-brush she had held all this while, and she remained speechless for a moment.

Sir Louis looked at her, and looked again.

There was a change in her face amounting to a transformation. How might he dare interpret it?

"You are not worse? Oh, surely you are not worse?" she said at last, looking at him with sudden earnestness.

"I do not think myself better. I might get better, or at least not get worse, under more favorable circumstances. As it is—but when one can not change circumstances, one had best not discuss them. Let us talk of something more likely to interest you. Let me look at your sketch." As he spoke, he stooped to pick up her brush. Their hands touched as he gave it her. There was a single instant's pause, during which her heart leaped up with a throb it had not known for years, with a throb that reminded her of the past time and her past girlhood.

"I hope you do not think it altogether indifferent to me whether you are well or ill, Sir Louis," she said, in her coldest, most measured

voice, as she took the paint-brush back into her trembling fingers. "After all you have done, and are doing, for my two brothers, and for which I have never yet thanked you adequately—I could scarcely be so ungrateful as not to care."

The tone of voice, the measured phrase, stung him into forgetfulness of his better self at last.

She could scarcely be so ungrateful! She would not be thought so indifferent! Well, if they had met in a Paris drawing-room. But here on the free mountain-side! Was it well?

"Keep your gratitude, madame," he rejoined bitterly. "I am not the man to care for it. It was not to win your gratitude that I served your brothers. It was in remembrance"—he raised himself, and pointed to a great crag of granite far below the alp, on a platform overhanging the Gave—"in remembrance of some days spent in this place, in remembrance of one hour spent under the shadow of that rock—one hour, when life was so perfected that heaven itself seemed opened. Don't speak the word 'gratitude' again, madame; it sounds to me like the faint praise denoting blame. Silence were more gracious."

"But I do not wish to be ungracious; and how can I be silent, when we are under such a real obligation to you? I ought, no doubt, to have expressed myself better, but one can not always find the right words. You know I was never very clever at expressing my thoughts, never very fluent," she said, and then blushed crimson, because now in her turn she had recalled that past which she had vowed to herself not to recall.

"No, I never thought so," he answered, more gently. "But, since you do not disdain to remember that we knew each other years ago, will you not concede that I am right if I say that the word, the idea of gratitude, as due to me from you, is not to be borne? Will you not concede thus much, though you may have forgotten that when we sat under yonder rock we loved each other—or thought we did—though my last appeal to the memory of that hour was not even deemed worth answering?—What of that? I say again, madame, the remembrance of the hour yonder will live with me as long as I live; therefore, I will not have your gratitude."

She suddenly pushed her drawing-board from her lap, and turned to him beseechingly.

"I could not help it, I could not help it!" she said vehemently at last. "If you only knew"—her voice failed from emotion, but she forced the words out—"and if I had but known; but I did not, till it was too late! Sir Louis, I never got your letter till I had been married a fortnight. If I had but known! My maid kept it in her pocket from forgetfulness; it came the night before my wedding-day. Oh, if I had but known!" And with this one last wail her voice died away in a sob. Sir Louis took her clasped hands, kissed them, and folded them between his own.

"Forgive me," Estelle said, speaking between her sobs; "it must have seemed so heartless, so cruel! I did not know how to act. I knew you had a right to be answered, but I did not dare to write myself. I was afraid of my husband then; afraid of what would be the consequences if he found out I loved you when I married him; because he loved me so, that—Oh, can not you understand? Can not you see why I dared not

write? I ought to have written, but I was so young then, so ignorant, so afraid. Will you not forgive me, now you know?"

"If I had ever had any thing to forgive, this moment would atone for it. It is I who should ask your forgiveness."

"You? Ah no, you have done nothing to want forgiveness! You were not faithless, you were not cowardly; it was I."

"Hush," he replied; "that harsh word 'cowardly' grates upon my ear as much as the word 'gratitude.' You must not revile yourself to me; I will not have it so."

"Ah!" she sighed, "you are kind and good, as you always were. Many a man would have scorned the woman who had treated him—even against her will—as I treated you; would have returned scorn for scorn. But I—you believe that I never scorned you, at least? No woman could scorn you, Sir Louis; I am sure you feel that. I, least of all, whatever circumstances may have been, since—since we were here together."

There she stopped. An explanation had been, in some sort, forced from her. Perhaps it was due: at all events it was given now, and could never be demanded again. He had let her hands go, and sat looking intently down on the grass—his face half turned from her.

CHAPTER XLV.

BEFORE THE RIVEN ROCK.

THE wind had risen suddenly, driving a cloud of mist before it along the course of the Gave. In a moment, while the alp was still filled with sunshine, the valley below was hidden as with a white pall.

"The storm!" exclaimed both together.

"What shall we do?" Estelle asked, in some anxiety, yet with a feeling of relief at Nature's supplying a topic so far removed from the range of sentiment, and so closely allied to the prosaic reality of a thorough wetting.

"We must stay here and watch it. We could not see our way down there now. But, with this wind, the path by the Gave will be cleared before very long." He spoke with the tone of decision a woman most naturally obeys.

Estelle sat quiet for a moment. Then, womanlike, reverting to possibilities, "I am sorry now that I came up so far. Mamma and Lady Vivian will be frightened."

"I, for one," Sir Louis replied, "am not sorry I came up so far. And I think Lady Vivian will survive the fright."

Estelle made no reply, but gathered up her brushes and replaced them in the paint-box. As she held up her sketch for a moment to see whether it had dried, before shutting her book, a gust of wind caught a loose leaf already sketched on, and whirled it round fantastically before her. She laid down her sketch-book and made a dart at it. Driven by the wind, it eddied farther and farther away, she following, to the very edge of the alp, where the short grass suddenly gave way to a flat wall of naked rock, terminated twenty feet below by a chaos of boulders and water-worn pebbles. At the very edge of the grass the paper was tossed back as by an invisible hand. She clutched it, and at the same moment flung

herself on the grass, catching at the stunted herb-
age with a cry of terror.

One step more, and she had lost her balance; the white fog-pall had closed over her life. It was climbing, crawling, stealthily and silent, already more than half-way up the flat face of the rock.

Her cry was echoed, then re-echoed among the rifts and crags above. Before the first echo had died away, Sir Louis was by her side with his arm thrown round her. He brought her back to her former seat, and made her lean against the rock. For a moment neither spoke.

"Good God!" he exclaimed at last, grasping her tightly by the arm, "you were nearly gone! How could you be so reckless?"

Her head swam, and she shut her eyes. She scarcely heard him, scarcely felt his hand on her arm. "It was the surprise," she said faintly; "the surprise of seeing the fog rolling up close to that wall of rock. I have often looked over before without being frightened."

"If you had gone," he went on passionately, with lips as white as her own; "if you had gone I would have followed! I never would have returned to Caunterets without you. Estelle, be what Fate has made you in this world: in the next you should have been mine!"

"Hush, hush!" she whispered. "Your wife, your children. Think of them; think of little Mandie and Bessie. Why, you have more to bind you to life than even I have."

"Ah, then you do acknowledge some ties to life," he went on. "Well for you! But for me, let the barrier of conventionalities be once broken, as now; let our two souls once stand face to face, and see; the truth will out. I love you, Estelle! I loved you the day I first saw you, and I shall love you on to the end."

"Hush, hush! Indeed you must not speak so," she said imploringly by voice and gesture.

"Hush! You forget."

"I forget nothing," he replied. "And I will speak. Are you so happy, that you scorn to let me ease my mind by speaking this once? If you choose, I will hold my peace ever after. But this once I will speak; for I have just seen you face to face with death. Estelle, we have both made our choice; or say our choice was made for us, and we were trapped into acceptance: it matters little. So be it. It can not be changed. But I speak now of myself; as I have learnt to know myself, there is that in me that can not be changed, either. Why do you shake your head? Why do you turn away? Is change so fine a thing that you covet it? Is disloyalty to my love a thing you, faithful by nature, should rejoice at? What do I ask of you? To see you, as often as I may. Is that so much? Do I ask even a kind word? Oh, Estelle, be just; I do not say, 'be generous.'"

"What you ask, little as you call it," she said, with trembling lips, "you know is more than I can grant—more than I ought to grant even if I could. And it would do you no good."

"That is scarcely the question," he replied. "Granted that it would do me no good, it could do you no harm. Mind, I do not ask even so much as the kind word you would throw your dog when he wags his tail as you pass. Only let me be. Does the sun, I wonder, grudge his warmth to the gray lizard that basks on the

stone? I am the lizard, if you will; you are my sun, Estelle."

It was impossible to stop him now. Silence she kept too, as best for the wildly-beating heart that was ready to betray her.

"If only," he went on, "I could dare hope that you would trust me as a brother, if ever the time came that you were in want of a friend, in want of kindness; I do not say I wish for such a time: God forbid! Only, if such a time did come, if ever you wanted help or counsel of any kind—"

She stopped him with a wave of her hand. Her heart might burst, but she would not let it speak. No. There should be lip-loyalty to Raymond, if she died for it.

"You forget strangely, Sir Louis. I can not be in want of help or counsel while I have my husband."

"Forgive me," he rejoined, "if I read your face so that I believed, or feared, that you might not find help or counsel where a woman naturally seeks it."

"My face told a false tale if it told aught except this—that I have a husband who loves me better than I deserve," she said, resolutely turning her face towards him.

"Well for you, madame, if it is so. I can but ask pardon once more for a mistake—a mistake," he went on, relapsing into his old bitterness of manner, "into which I was the more easily led, perhaps, from my own domestic relations presenting any thing but an Elysian aspect."

What could she do, but forgive him in her heart?

"Do not speak of that," she said kindly. "As you said yourself, there are some things best undiscussed. Will you carry my paint-box?" she said, rising. "I think the fog has rolled deeper down the valley. If only the path as far as La Raillère is clear, we may venture."

Sir Louis took the paint-box and followed her down by the easier path he had taken with the idiot. He looked at the paint-box, and knew it for the same old one she had always had. He put it against his cheek for a moment; then lent his whole attention to their safe descent to the point where he had tied his horse.

The idiot was out of sight; sleeping, most likely, under a bush or in a cleft of the rock, Estelle said: he would have sense enough to shelter himself from the weather. They got down safely as far as Mahourat, and there the fog stopped them short; a wild gust of wind was blowing it upward. Suddenly the air darkened. From above, below, around, clouds were rolling, gathering speed and volume as they travelled. Estelle and Sir Louis looked at the path, barred a few feet in front of them, and then at each other in dismay.

"We are in the very midst of the storm," cried Estelle. "Look, even the horse is afraid!"

Her outspoken fear made him express more assurance than he felt. "The horse knows that rain and thunder are coming," said he. "But neither will do him any harm. Now he does not think about the lightning, which might just possibly hurt him, though there are a hundred chances to one it does not. Let us get away from the trees. Come this side, madame, where those round boulders will shelter us from the worst of the wind."

She did as she was told, and waited trembling. They were nearly opposite the platform where stood, overhanging the Gave, the granite crag Sir Louis had bid her remember just before. From behind the crag, attracted by the sound of their voices, crept the idiot Celestin. He came towards them, half crawling, half running, and crept close to the horse, with foolish gestures of entreaty.

"Curious! He seems frightened," said Sir Louis, "and yet he was sitting in what to my knowledge is a spot to try any man's head even on a clear calm day. Why should he choose that spot, I wonder?"

He had scarcely spoken, when a blaze of fire filled the space before them. The clouds overhead met and rolled back with an awful reverberation; the granite crag rocked, split asunder, one half rolling down into the torrent, the other half remaining, a monument of its own power of resistance; in less than a moment it was hid from their sight by the storm-cloud driving down from the gorge of the Pont d'Espagne.

Estelle gave a faint cry. Blinded by the lightning, deafened by the roar of the wind and the thunder, she threw herself against Sir Louis, quivering from head to foot.

"Louis, Louis, save me!" she cried, in pure physical terror.

The old voice, the old words. Silently he put his arm round her. In spite of the obvious danger, he felt glad, happy beyond what he had dared hope. She had wanted help, and she had called him—in her old frank, outspoken voice. So be it, now and always. He was her slave, her tool, to be used when she had use for him, thrown aside when the need was over. So he had not lived quite in vain, after all.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ORDEAL.

ALL that night, as she lay shuddering and storm-driven in her dreams—all the next day, with the lightning flashing across her eyes whenever she closed them, with the roar of the thunder and the crash of the falling rock still ringing in her ears—Estelle's one thought was that she must go back to her husband.

Her mother coming in suddenly found her up, and sitting with her writing-book before her. Invoking the name of the chief physician of the place, Mrs. Russell ordered her instantly back to her bed again.

"When I have written to Raymond, mamma," "I have written to him already. You quite frightened me last night. I thought you were going to be ill; and of course if any thing happened to you while you were with me, Raymond would take me to task for not having taken better care of you."

"Raymond will take nobody but myself to task; Raymond is always just," Estelle said, half to herself. Then anxiously: "But do you think he will come? Are you sure he will come, mamma?"

"If he does not, I shall be extremely surprised," Mrs. Russell answered loftily.

"Will Madame la Comtesse receive Miladi Vivian?" asked Lisette, coming in.

Estelle's pale face flushed. "Oh, mamma, what am I to do? Must I see her?"

Mrs. Russell looked displeased. "She had much better keep to her own rooms and nurse that unfortunate husband of hers. She makes his home odious to him, and then complains because he wanders about and exposes himself to the weather. I am going in to see him myself to-day, poor fellow! If you do let Lady Vivian in, don't let her stay more than five minutes."

"My dear creature, what a fever you are in!" was her ladyship's exclamation, as she touched Estelle's hand. "You won't mind my not kissing you? Because I always feel so nervous at kissing any one who is feverish, on the dear children's account. One never knows what it's going to turn out, in this hot country."

Estelle almost laughed, ill as she felt. It was mostly the fear that Lady Vivian would kiss her which had made her wish to deny her admittance, and which made her hands so hot and her cheek so flushed.

"Well, do tell me exactly what the doctor thinks of you?" pursued her ladyship, as she mentally criticised the cut of Estelle's dressing-gown.

Estelle evaded the question. She did not believe the doctor thought any thing in particular. She had got wet through and had had a fright. The case seemed plain enough, did it not?

"I know Mrs. Russell had made up her mind last night that you were going to have an illness of some sort. You needn't tell her I told you that, of course," said Lady Vivian; "I dare say it was nothing but nervousness. I only hope my husband is not going to be dreadfully ill. I said to him yesterday as soon as ever I saw him, 'Now, Louis, you're in for an attack of pleurisy.' And I know his valet was messing about mustard or something this morning; my maid told me so. But my husband is so odd, you know. He doesn't like any body to know any thing about his ailments. Would you believe it? he has had blisters on, and I have never known it till ever so long afterwards! He's very odd. Like his mother, I suppose."

"Indeed! Who was Mrs. Vivian?" Estelle asked, for the sake of saying something.

"Oh, my dear, a person of no family at all. You won't find her in 'Debrett' or 'Dod' either. She's Irish; and when one has said that, one has said every thing. I believe her to be a well-meaning sort of woman in her way, but she is a person I have always found it necessary to keep at arm's length, you understand. Whenever we are at the Court I am in a tremor lest either of the dear children should learn to imitate her horrid Dublin accent. Children are such mimics, you know."

Estelle was thankful for her mother's entrance at this juncture. Mrs. Russell dismissed Lady Vivian with but little ceremony, and sent her daughter back to bed.

How terribly long the hours seemed! She found herself calculating over and over again the time that must elapse before Raymond could come to her; found herself repeating "The day after to-morrow, the day after to-morrow;" then forgetting, then calculating again. The third day came, and neither Raymond nor a letter. Mrs. Russell was discomposed and anxious. All

day her daughter reiterated the question, "When will Raymond come?"

"I will write again if you like," Mrs. Russell said at last, willing to humor what she believed to be a sick fancy.

"Tell him to make haste," Estelle said. "I can not wait. If he does not come to-morrow, I shall set off."

Wearied with her daughter's restlessness, Mrs. Russell accepted Lady Vivian's invitation to take an evening drive, and left Estelle under the charge of Lisette, who answered all the injunctions laid upon her with an invariable, "You may depend upon me, madame."

Lisette imagined that her mistress wanted amusement, and did her best to keep up an unceasing flow of small-talk; succeeding at last in driving Estelle to the borders of distraction.

Seeing that her attempts at amusing Madame la Comtesse only resulted in madame's resolutely turning to the wall and shutting her eyes, the waiting-maid left the room, and presently returned with a glass of sugared-water, flavored with the inevitable orange-flower water; and a message from Sir Louis Vivian.

He wished to know how madame was. Twice a day had Lisette received the same message from the valet, and had returned what answer she chose. Now, she imagined, it might amuse madame to speak English, and talk over the events of the storm, the fright, and so on, with the companion of her misadventure. "I saw him myself," said Lisette, "this poor gentleman. He looks ill indeed; worse than madame."

Estelle took a sudden resolution. Five minutes later she was in the drawing-room, face to face with Sir Louis. She forced herself to look at him well. Then, having looked her full, she turned her eyes away, thinking that it was well indeed she had resolved on going back to her husband.

"I can only stay here a few minutes," she said, as soon as she had nerved herself to speak. "But it was as well for me to see you, because I have something to say which I could trust to no messenger. You said, up yonder, on the mountain, that all you asked, all you cared for, was to see me. You did not ask for kindness, only to be let see me. Little enough it seemed. So little, that many a woman would have granted it from pure good-nature. So little, that many a man, if he had cared to ask at all, would have dared more—asked for more."

Sir Louis bent forward breathlessly. She turned paler and paler as she spoke, and her voice became almost inaudible.

"Hear me out," she went on, raising her hand as he would have spoken. "Let me say what I have to say, first. You were always kind and good. Try to think kindly of me still, when I tell you that for my own sake I can not see you any more. You said it could do me no harm, and was the only thing you cared for. It would do me harm, Sir Louis, such harm as I dare not risk. For I do not belong to myself alone, I belong to my husband."

"You wrong yourself, madame!" Sir Louis exclaimed hastily. "If what you have been saying is the consequence of any chance word or look of mine, it is I who am to blame, not you. Oh madame, believe me, no knight in the age of chivalry ever served his lady with less hope

CHAPTER XLVII.

ONE LAST LOOK.

of guerdon than I would serve you, if I might. Guerdon! As I said, to see you is guerdon beyond my deserts. And, madame—forgive me, if I speak of myself and my own miseries—I do not think it will be for very long—I am sure it can not be for very long. Tell me, madame, in the vile prisons of the South, do not they let the condemned criminal feast, the day before his execution, as he never feasted in his life? I am condemned. My span of life is growing shorter and shorter. Will you—so kindly, so gracious by nature—refuse a dying wretch his first, his last banquet? Can you refuse?” he cried, eager and panting.

It was piteous to see his sunken cheeks, pale, then suddenly dyed scarlet, then paling again, as he ceased speaking; piteous to note the tremulous hands, the failing breath.

Once more Estelle nerved herself to speak. So difficult was it now become to keep her resolve in despite of her old love's appeal, that her judgment told her of the necessity of doing violence to every instinct of kindness, if that resolve were to be kept in its integrity.

“I repeat,” she cried, “I dare not be kind! Think of me as you will, this must be the last time that we speak to each other—shall be the last time. Remember this, that if you have to die, I have to live. And—say that I am foolish, cruel, weak-minded—say what you will, I will have none of your knightly service. Trust me, Sir Louis, the greatest, the only service you can do me now, is never to see me again. Say good-bye. Let there be no further parleying,” she said, as he would have spoken.

“You shall be obeyed,” he said, after a pause, during which his eyes had never moved from her drooping figure. “In all that may have led to this, I alone am to blame. Say, before I go, that you forgive me. That is all I ask now. Is that too much?”

“Ah,” she cried, bursting into tears at last, “what have you to do with asking forgiveness? It is I who should ask that!”

Sir Louis stood up: he tried to speak, but in vain. At last: “Something tells me you are right, madame,” he said in a low voice, “in deciding that we must part. I will distress you no further. May I shake hands with you? It is for the last time. To-morrow I will leave Caute-rets.”

“Yes, shake hands,” Estelle replied, rising. “You are doing me the only kindness you could do, in going away. By-and-by I may dare to think it was for *my* sake. Once more, good-bye.”

“Yes.—It will not be for long. Good-bye.”

She looked after him as he left the room; then turned, and, hiding her face, wept as if her heart would break. Now the ordeal was over, she knew how terrible it had been. There had been no mitigation; she had had the full taste of the bitterness. No more peace would she have now, till either she or he were dead. If only his wife were a kind, good woman; if only there were a chance of her tenderness being awakened! But Estelle could not even cling to that chance. Death seemed the only solution to his unhappiness. If the grim, kindly phantom would but take her in his arms as well! But the thought of Raymond forbade that wish. She had to do with life as long as Raymond lived.

At last!

She had told what she had to tell; and now she had sunk down, and lay on the couch with her face hidden, shrinking away from Raymond like a frightened animal from its master's eye.

Since his first question, when on his sudden entrance his wife had refused his kiss and moved herself away from him, till now, he had not uttered a word. The surprise of it all had struck him dumb. He stood and looked at her, first in amazement, then in a quiver of rage and pain.

If he would but speak! she thought, shivering with fear. Wild words, wild acts—any thing were better than this horrid silence, so unlike Raymond.

At last, but not till she could bear the silence no longer, he spoke:

“So! You, whom I worshipped as the very incarnation of truth, have been all these years an incarnate lie—a fair-seeming sham, like the rest of the world! So little do we husbands know of the women who befooled us! Why, I could have sworn you loved me! I could have sworn that I—I alone—had awoke love in your heart—so shy, so frightened, as you were, and then so tender; and I, poor, happy fool, had been forestalled! Oh, Estelle, Estelle, how could you?—how could you do it?—when you knew how I adored you!”

“It would have been kinder,” he went on, after a pause, “to have told me then; kinder than to have cheated me so.”

“I know now,” she answered, humbly, “that I ought to have told you. But I was afraid—”

“Afraid!” Raymond ejaculated. “Afraid of me, who loved the very ground she trod on!”

“—And I hoped, seeing how good you were to me, that I should come to love you in time; and so I did, Raymond.”

“And what that love was worth this hour shows,” he rejoined, with a sudden outburst of fierceness. “Nevertheless, it is well that I know, late as it is. It is well to have done with shams, even when one loses one's Eden thereby.”

“Yes,” Estelle murmured, “let there be truth between us, if there can be nothing more.”

“Even so,” he answered with a bitter laugh.

“Oh, Raymond!” she said, weeping, for the laugh humiliated her as if it had been a blow; “if you had but staid here, as I entreated you, it might never have come to this.”

“How was I to suppose you wanted a watchdog?” was his answer. “I thought—I thought it was your love for me that made you urge my staying, and—and—it was my very fondness for you that made me deaf to your wish; it was because I felt there was a sufficient reason for my leaving you, and would not that any should say, ‘He neglects all for his wife's smile.’ I would not have had that reproach from myself even; and it might have come to that had I staid here as you wished. I would not have had that said for worlds, I tell you; nor have said it to myself, because it would have implied blame to you. And—I trusted you so, that I never thought you wanted looking after.”

He ceased, with a heavy sigh, and began walking up and down the room.

"Who is this man?" he said, stopping suddenly in his walk.

She started up and faced him then. "Oh, do not ask that," she cried, clasping her hands. "He will leave Canterets to-morrow. I told him he must never attempt to see me again. Oh, Raymond, spare me! Do not kill him!"

"You have not told me his name yet. And as to sparing him, or you either, I ask you whether, from what you know of me, it seems likely I would bring my wife's name before the public? Will you answer my question? Who is this man?"

"I will not tell you," she answered, firmly. "All that it was right to tell you—all that wifely duty required—I have told. More I will not tell; and you have no right to ask."

"No right?" he repeated.

"None!"

He had never seen his wife's face set so stubbornly. Every feature seemed petrified in its resolve for silence. He knew it was no good asking her.

"You have somewhat strange ideas of conjugal rights," he said bitterly, after scanning her face. "Of course, you know that the information you choose to withhold I am precluded from seeking in any other quarter. You count upon that; though, after all, why should you?"

"I have taken heed for your honor," she replied, suddenly flashing out. "Do you take heed for mine! This matter lies between you and me—wife and husband—alone. There is no third between us two. Make a third, and you make matters worse. Make a third, and you will take away from me even the remembrance of your past love—which was what made me confide in you so far. Trust me, Raymond, if you can not love me any more. And do not wish to know what I will never tell you or any one. It is enough for me that God knows it all."

"God!" he returned, with a sneer. "Does your mother know it?"

"No!" she replied, vehemently. "Did I not say that it was between you and me alone?"

He stood silent for a moment; then:

"You wish to return to Montaigne?"

"Yes," she answered, firmly.

"Can you be ready to-morrow? Or are you not strong enough? Your mother's letter expressed some fear that you were on the verge of an illness. I should be sorry to make you travel if it would injure your health."

"I am ready to go whenever you choose," was her answer. "And if—if I am to be ill—take me home! Oh, Raymond, take me home! Don't let me be ill here," she cried. "Not here, where every thing reminds me—"

"I will take you home," he answered, more gently than he had spoken yet.

The dawn had not reached the valley, and the gray fog still hung over the river, when Sir Louis took his way on horseback up the solitary path to La Raillière.

Faithful to his promise, he had made arrangements the night before for leaving Canterets that day. Lady Vivian had exclaimed and objected, as was her wont, and had been peremptorily silenced by the word "business!" Demanding their destination, Sir Louis had named Paris, be-

ing the first word that came into his head. Having said it, he abode by it—why not Paris as well as any other place?—and had left his wife in sullen wonderment at the business that could take her husband to Paris just when all civilized people were leaving it.

As he passed his children's room a sudden impulse came over him, and he entered softly. They lay in all the careless grace of childhood, the two faces leaning cheek on cheek, flushed with heat and sleep, arms tossed, hair entangled, and lips parting in the sweet unconscious smile that invites a kiss.

Sir Louis stooped over the bed, kissed each softly—once—twice—kissed them for himself and for their mother, remembering with a pang the only time when he had seen Estelle kiss Maudie: the thrill that had run through him as he recognized the passionate maternal instinct in the childless woman, and the child's sudden flush of wonder as she climbed up on his knee, whispering, open-eyed, "And yet I haven't my prettiest dress on!"

Once again he laid his lips on Maudie's with a motherly touch of tenderness, then left the silent house. His object in riding out so early was to see for the last time the spot where that one small moment of happiness had been passed. He knew it well, yet would know it better. So we look and look, and turn to look once more, on a dead face over which the coffin-lid is about to close.

Strange omen! That in the self-same hour when, in the whirl of unforeseen circumstances, he had been impelled to recall to Estelle that one perfect hour in their lives, the lichen-stained monument, that bade fair to stand centuries after the span of their existence was finished, had disappeared before their eyes. There stood the remnant, fire-struck, ragged, the very face of it changed past recognition. Yet not less dear would the memory of its new face be in the future, for the sake of that terrified appeal which had once more laid bare Estelle's heart before him.

He rode on, possessed with strange minglings of passion and regret. Regret that he had given rein to his tongue; longings that the dear voice might speak once more in its old accents; acquiescence in the instinct of right which forbade it: feelings such as these chased past each other as he rode, whirling inextricably, like leaves before the autumn wind.

He dismounted, and stood before the old rock. He thought he would try to draw it; just a bare outline on a leaf of his pocket-book. That, and a little pink heath which sprouted on the turf close by, would be his only memorial of Estelle de Montaigne.

He picked the flower, and drew the outline; then walked a little way, looking back at every step.

He felt as if he could never tear himself from the spot. Yet back he must go, and that soon. Never before had he felt to its full the exquisite beauty of the scene; never before had it been so dear, so sacred. Up higher was another favorite haunt of Estelle's; a place they had often visited together in the dear bygone time; last, he remembered, the day before their long parting. She had stood herself, then made him stand, where the tossing spray made a rainbow halo round his head, on a rock above the cascade; a moss-grown, ferny rock, with juts and hollows,

where one could rest safely and listen to the roar of the whirlpool as it boiled below.

"The last time, indeed!" he muttered, as he scrambled breathlessly to the place, having tied his horse to a fir-branch by the path-side. For one moment he was forced to stop short; his breath failed him altogether.

"My breathing is getting worse and worse," he thought, the fact being forced upon his attention; "or is it this cold, damp morning air, to which I am unaccustomed?"

He bent his head on his hands, suddenly overcome by the feeling of failing strength and utter loneliness. For one bitter moment this feeling carried him away like a flood, and was as a foretaste of death to him. At last, raising his head, he exclaimed aloud, "I will go to my mother; the kindest, most faithful heart that ever beat! Nay, I will send for her to meet me half-way. She will not grudge the trouble; she made me promise to send for her if ever I wanted her. Dear old mother! I think it would comfort me, may be, to talk to her a little. Dear kind old mother! the thought of her shall make me bear my weariness with a stouter heart."

Thus musing, he wrote these words in a blank leaf of his pocket-book, opposite to the drawing of the rock.

"My dear old mother; I know you are always ready to come to me when I want you; and I want your companionship now most sorely"—

The sun had risen, and was shining through the misty gorge. Sir Louis rose, and picked his way, half-dazzled by the sudden access of light, to the highest point of the rock, beneath which the torrent had mined and fretted itself a passage, some thirty feet below, in pitchy darkness. One ray from the cleft of the gorge above lit upon his head as he stood. "This is the place," he murmured, looking round. "Here we stood—she and I; and I shall never hear her laugh again as she laughed then; never hear her speak—kindly or coldly, dear any way—never again! Oh! my darling, you can not help yourself; and you are right, I know. And I know that I could not love you better, were you aught but what you are. And yet—oh, Estelle, to think that I, who love you so, have never taken one kiss from those dear lips of yours that were mine by right! Not one poor kiss! Only a bit of moss, only a tiny flower, to remember her by—"

At his foot he spied a drooping fern he knew she loved, and stooped to pick it.

His foot slipped—

* * * * *

The sun rose higher, dispelling the chilly mist; higher and fuller rose the morning hymn of the birds in the fir forest. Loud and pitiless the water dashed against the slippery black rock. Loud and pitiless it hurried down the valley, bearing one faithful heart to its last rest amid the deep hollows where the sunlight strays not; where eternal silence has found a home.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE INLAID CABINET.

It was midwinter. The Countess Dowager had left the château, and was enjoying the carnival time in Toulouse in company with her *pro-*

tégée Hortense. Countess Estelle, sole mistress of herself and of the château, sat alone in a room belonging to a suite long since deserted, situated above the chapel. This room was the dampest, most draughty, most cheerless of the whole set. Yet there she had been sitting the whole afternoon, and was sitting still, looking vacantly at the tops of the leafless poplars as they swayed violently in the north wind.

There was a dreary listlessness in her face, a settled weariness in her attitude, quite unlike the calm repose of her former demeanor. That told of content with her lot in life, of hope in the unknown future. This told of apathy, of hope destroyed, of a heart so numbed that time could neither bring nor take away aught of interest or affection.

There was a letter on the table near her. She took it up, read it through, paused, then read it again, and finally put it in her pocket, and returned to her old employment of gazing listlessly at the tops of the trees.

The wind shook the casement, moaning like a living creature praying to be let in from the storm. Still she sat, with her hands folded on her knee, taking no heed of the cold within nor the din without, till the short afternoon closed in, and the moon began to show between the driving clouds.

Then, looking at her watch by the dim light, she rose and walked quickly through a maze of intricate passages to her own rooms on the first floor. As she passed the door which gave access to this part of the château, her step grew stealthy, as if she were an intruder rather than the mistress of the place.

She stopped before Raymond's study door, lifted the curtain after a moment's hesitation, and entered. The fire was low; she brought billets of wood from the antechamber, and set to work to replenish the hearth, pausing every moment to listen for some distant sound. But silence reigned within—without, the wind still roared in the trees and shook the casements. She let down the window-curtains, placed a chair invitingly by the fire-side, and left the room, saying, "He will find all snug when he comes in."

She went back, not to her own luxurious boudoir adjoining, but to the dismal room where she had passed the afternoon. There she stood listening close to the window, till the clatter of a horse's hoofs could be heard coming up the avenue. Then she hurried back through the dark passages to her own room, where Lisette was waiting and her dinner-dress laid ready on the bed.

"Madame will have plenty of time," Lisette observed, as Estelle uttered an expression of impatience during the maid's performance of her office. "Monsieur is only just come in. Madame is shivering!"

"It is nothing," Estelle replied. "Only make haste, Lisette; monsieur will be so hungry after his ride," she added, as if in apology for her impatience.

"Do him good to wait!" thought Lisette. Then aloud: "You may depend on me, madame. There! now will madame look in the glass?"

"It does not matter," Estelle replied. Then, careful not to hurt the maid's feelings, she looked at herself, but shook her head, saying, "Yes, Lisette, you have done your best, as you always

do. But oh, you will never make me look nice as you used to do; never, never again, Lisette!"

"*Pardie!*" Lisette exclaimed; "if madame would but do something! If madame would have a new toilet, for instance; say, a mauve silk and head-dress to match, and leave off her mourning. Without a vestige of color, one understands well that madame looks often like a ghost. Or if"—and here Lisette's voice sank to a confidential whisper—"if madame would but try the merest touch of rouge? Just a touch such as monsieur would never find out?"

Estelle negatived both propositions. "My heart is in mourning," she said, "therefore black is most fitting for my dress. And as for rouge, I don't care whether monsieur finds it out or not: rouge would be an acted falsehood, and I'll have none of it. Let my white cheeks remain. Who cares?"

She stood by the fire-place waiting and listening. Then, looking at her watch, she suddenly left the room. The maid looked after her, sighed, shook her head, and began to put the room in order.

"I know one thing," she soliloquized as she replaced the articles in her mistress's dressing-case, "and that is, that I'd rather look at her face, pale and thin and worn as it is, than at the faces of half the fine ladies I see;" and with a vicious snap, as if to give expression to some feeling that else she must not utter, Lisette shut the dressing-case and left the room.

Estelle entered the drawing room by one door as her husband entered by another. As she walked to the upper end of the room, the butler, throwing open the door of communication with the dining-room, announced dinner.

Raymond gave her his arm in silence. In silence the two first courses passed. Then, with a visible, almost unconquerable reluctance, Estelle spoke:

"I wish to consult you about a letter I received this afternoon."

"Indeed!" was Raymond's brief reply.

"It is from Lady Vivian."

"Oh!" said Raymond, and waited for further information.

But Estelle had not courage to proceed in face of so much laconism. She spoke no more till dinner was over, and they returned to the drawing-room.

Then, feeling that what she had to say must be said, and that if Raymond retired to his study she would never have courage to follow him, she forced herself to speak to him once more:

"Lady Vivian writes, saying she finds England very cold and dull, now she can not go into society; and she wants to come abroad again and remain for about year. She wants us to inquire if there is a suitable house in the neighborhood."

"May I see the letter?"

She handed it to him, and sat looking at the fire while he read it. Once they would have read a letter together arm in arm, cheek on cheek. Now he sat in his place—she in hers, far apart, while he spelt out the meaning of the angular English handwriting as best he could: he neither asking, nor she offering, the needed help.

"Thank you," he said, as he folded up the letter and returned it. "Do all English widows

show their grief for their dead husbands thus?" he asked, pointing to the half-inch border of black that encircled the envelope.

"I do not know," Estelle answered faintly.

"Or—is the depth of mourning supposed to appease in some sort the manes of the dead, unloved when living? This *miladi* did not love her husband too much, I believe."

"I do not know. I should think she was sorry for him—surely she must feel such a loss. Her nerves were frightfully upset, mamma said once or twice in her letters." Estelle turned paler and paler as she spoke. A stranger, looking carelessly at her for the first time, would have said she was going to faint. Raymond never looked once at her. He was staring fixedly at the burning logs.

"Nerves upset? I dare say! It would take something more or less than flesh and blood to pass through the shock of such a catastrophe with no harm to the nervous system. Why, every one in the hotel felt it in some degree. I know my nerves were upset for weeks after; even your mother, of all women, lost her presence of mind for a moment. Oh, ay, I do not doubt Lady Vivian's nerves being upset. Why, even you, who I believe did not care two straws for *miladi*—"

"I—I have left my handkerchief in the dining-room," Estelle muttered, rising hurriedly. She passed through, shutting the door behind her, and fell into the nearest chair, trembling violently.

"How can I bear it?" she muttered, pressing her hand to her heart. "How can I bear it? It will kill me!" She rose in a moment and staggered to the sideboard, filled herself a glass of the strongest wine there, and drank it down eagerly. "Surely," she thought, "he can not suspect! Surely he would not be capable of such a refinement of cruelty! Surely not that, for the sake of his old love for me! And yet how is it that he alludes to that time, to those people, at all? Is it only chance, or what? Whatever it is, I feel I can not bear it much longer. I feel now as if I must tell him, and beg him in pity never to speak of *that* again."

"Yet no," she went on, as the wine, reviving her for a moment, brought back a faint color to her lips and warmth to her heart—"No! I said I would be silent; and so I will. What if it kills me? Who cares?"

She returned to the drawing-room. Raymond still sat looking at the fire. He looked up, but made no remark on her absence. When she had seated herself, he said, turning round to her with a formal politeness which marked how strange each had become to the other: "What are your wishes with regard to that letter?"

"I scarcely know. I believe I have no wish either way. What is your wish? Of course I should not act at all without consulting you first."

Raymond bowed his head. "I do not feel interest enough in Lady Vivian to have any wish in the matter. If she is not disagreeable to you, and if you would like to be civil to her, I shall be happy to look out for a house. Of course I could not allow you to take such a trouble upon yourself."

"We were never very congenial companions," Estelle said; "but I have neither the right nor the wish to be uncivil to her."

"I think I remember," said Raymond after a pause, "that her late husband—poor fellow!—was of considerable use to one or both of your brothers?"

"To Harry, yes," Estelle forced herself to answer.

"Then that, I think," Raymond pursued, "ought to decide the question. Do you not think so?"

"Yes," Estelle answered again. If Raymond had but looked, he would have seen her face set in an agony of pain. But it was a habit he had got into, that of turning his eyes from her while his face was turned towards her when he spoke. Now and then, when there seemed no chance of her seeing him, he would allow his eyes to rest upon her, but seldom, and then only for a glance, and he would turn resolutely away, as if it were a weakness he did not choose to allow himself to fall into.

"Then one of us—you perhaps—will write to-morrow and say the best shall be done *à propos* of this house?"

"Yes, I will write if you wish. I suppose there is no very great hurry," said Estelle, forcing herself to speak. But in spite of her self-command she felt she dared not stay longer in the room. She rose, and saying "Good-night" as she passed, groped her way to her bed-chamber.

"If I can but bear it to the end without betraying myself," she thought as she fell on the floor. She did not attempt to call Lisette; but waited till sense and feeling had returned, and she could rise and walk steadily. She crept back to the dining-room and filled herself another glass of wine. "I owe it to poor Raymond," she thought, as she drank it down, "that no one shall suspect what I do not choose to let him know. Let me try to remember that always."

By-and-by, judging that her face would bear Lisette's scrutiny, she returned to her room, summoned her, and suffered herself to be undressed in silence.

"Give me that miniature," she said, pointing to one on the table.

"There are two, madame," said Lisette, bringing them to the bedside. They were two portraits of her lost boy.

"This one. No—ah, give me both; both," she said, taking them and pressing them to her lips in turn. "They are all I have left!" she exclaimed, laying her hand over them as she composed herself to sleep.

* * * * *

In spite of the proverbial cold and dullness of England, Lady Vivian would have been quite able to bear both, had she so chosen, to a much greater degree than they reached in the calm shelter of Vivian Court, known as one of the warmest, pleasantest spots in all the sweet county of Devon. Given, a house, say on the brink of Dartmoor, filled with idle young men, and Lady Vivian as *châtelaine*, entertainer-in-chief, acknowledged belle and toast of the whole party, and my lady would have voted the season neither cold nor dull.

But times had changed most woefully at the Court, and her sojourn there became daily more hateful to her. Mrs. Vivian, finding herself named one of the guardians to her son's children, chose, in virtue of her office, to assume an author-

ity at the Court which she had never dreamt of during his lifetime. Her position was strengthened by the fact of her retaining her rooms there at Sir Louis's special request, notified in his will. Here then she set up her stronghold, and kept a sharp look-out for her grandchildren's interests, choosing to consider herself as particularly appointed thereto, and to keeping her daughter-in-law in order, by her departed son. The other guardian was the deceased baronet's old friend, Dr. Vandeleur, of whose appointment Lady Vivian could not even think without impatience, so intolerable was it that the person whom she had always chosen to keep at a distance during her husband's life should, by the event of his death, be invested with not a little of that husband's authority.

At her old home there was fresh annoyance in store for her. Captain Waldron had at last succeeded in so far ingratiating himself with Admiral Maurice as to gain his consent to marry his daughter Lizzie as soon as he should attain the rank of major. Lizzie, in the first flush of satisfaction at her engagement with her slippery cousin Herbert, paraded her feelings too openly at the Court—or Lady Vivian thought so, which came to the same thing—and high words followed on both sides.

"Don't make too sure of the fascinating Herbert," sneered her ladyship. "You have to wait awhile yet, and we all know how many slips there are between cup and lip. Why, I'll bet you—let me see, any thing—that, if I chose, I could bring Herbert to my feet again. I know he will never be so fond of you as he was of me."

"He was fond of you years ago, and you behaved most shamefully to him," retorted Lizzie; "yes, most shamefully, Ju! Being engaged, you should have kept to your engagement. Oh, you may sneer, but I tell you your conduct was abominable, and a very bad example to me! If it hadn't been for Henrietta, I should have gone on as heartless as you had helped to make me."

"Upon my word!" Lady Vivian gasped, in utter astonishment.

"And really," pursued the merciless younger sister, "at your age, and with your figure, you must be vain indeed to think of captivating Herbert. Why"—and Lizzie glanced at her own lithe figure as reflected in the nearest mirror—"Herbert thinks my figure perfect, and I know it's a better one than yours ever was. As for you, you'd better bant, Ju, or you will have no waist left in a year or two!"

"Don't be too proud of your slim waist," retorted Lady Vivian, who had by this time recovered her astonishment and found her voice. "My figure is much nearer perfection now than it was when I laced tight. When did you ever see an antique statue with a small waist?"

"Sour grapes!" laughed Lizzie, straightening herself at the glass, with her pretty head on one side. "You're welcome to your waist after the antique. Herbert likes my waist, and he likes me, and I don't believe there's the slightest danger of his being taken in by you again, after the treatment he experienced before at your hands."

"If I only chose to try!" said Lady Vivian. "And I will try, if it be only to punish you as you deserve for the daring manner in which you have spoken to me."

After that there was an open quarrel. Lizzie

ceased her visits at the Court, which Lady Vivian did not care for; but it also prevented Herbert Waldron's visiting there when he was in the neighborhood, which Lady Vivian did care for, as it proved her younger sister to have fascinated the handsome soldier to some purpose at last.

But this was by-the-by. One home annoyance, worse than any, was, that there was no longer a purse at hand for my lady to dive into when her own was empty. She had her jointure, and dared not to go beyond it. A certain sum was to be applied to the education of the children, subject to the guardians' discretion and supervision, the rest to be applied to the improvement of the estate, or to accumulate till the children were of age. Beyond her own jointure Lady Vivian could touch nothing.

It was a drizzling afternoon, and the two widows sat together in a little room which had been the late baronet's study.

There had just been a battle between the two, and both were rather tired of hostilities for the moment, and inclined to make peace from sheer exhaustion.

"I shan't go out at all this afternoon," said her ladyship; "and as for visitors, I am sure you may keep people away from me if you like, for there is no one in the neighborhood that I care to see. So you had better give standing orders that nobody is to be admitted, Mrs. Vivian, and then nobody will be shocked about my not wearing a widow's cap."

Mrs. Vivian shuddered in the most impressive manner. "I have said all I intended to say on that subject," she replied, "and I shall say no more."

"So much the better," my lady muttered in French, shrugging her shoulders.

Mrs. Vivian imagined from the tone that the words were neither courteous nor complimentary; but, not understanding French, she wisely attempted no answer, but applied herself to counting the stitches on her knitting-needles.

At last, after yawning till her lower jaw was in imminent risk of dislocation, my lady cast her idle eyes on an old inlaid Italian cabinet that stood in a corner. It suddenly occurred to her that she had never seen the inside of it, and that she would do so now. She went to her room and brought back a basketful of old bunches of keys, and began trying them one after the other without success.

At last, after quietly watching each unavailing attempt, Mrs. Vivian opened her lips to say: "It is not likely you will find the key you want on any of those bunches, Lady Vivian. My dear departed son always kept the key of that cabinet himself; and it is probable that it was a key of ancient workmanship, as the cabinet evidently is."

"What could he have kept inside, I wonder? It could scarcely have been papers, or else the lawyers would have wanted it to be opened before now."

"I can not tell. Samples of Cornish ore, perhaps. But he never told me, and I never presumed to inquire," said Mrs. Vivian, severely.

"I have seen the key," quoth Maudie, who was leaning on her grandmother's knee.

"What was it like, my pet?"

"The top was like a little goat butting with his horns. I only saw it once. I was in papa's

room when he was dressing, and he let me play with it for a minute. He always wore it round his neck."

"That child"—Lady Vivian cried, throwing down the keys and drawing forth her handkerchief—"that child will be the death of me! I can not have my nerves so upset; I will not. Mrs. Vivian, after all I have gone through, it is most unkind of you to encourage Maudie in this manner. Maudie, go to your nursery, and don't come down stairs till I send for you."

Maudie began to pout and cry. Mrs. Vivian rose, and took her up to the nursery, where she remained till the child's tears had dried, when she returned to the study, after promising both children a nice game of play, in "grandma's own room," in the evening.

My lady had laid aside all insignia of distress, and was standing by while a carpenter, who happened to be working in the house that afternoon, was picking the lock after a clumsy, country sort of fashion.

The lock once picked, Lady Vivian hardly waited till the carpenter had withdrawn to fling open the doors of the cabinet. Her doing so, and the start and exclamation that followed instantaneously made Mrs. Vivian get up and peep inside too.

Instead of the usual conglomeration of drawers and pigeon-holes, the cabinet was nothing more than a hollow box; and its contents astonished Mrs. Vivian nearly as much as Lady Vivian. They consisted of a female bust in white marble, from which Lady Vivian had just snatched the gauze covering, and of an old portfolio.

"No, I never will believe it!" she exclaimed. Hurriedly she took forth the bust and placed it on the table, and then brought out the old portfolio to the light. A gleam that would have augured ill for Sir Louis, had he been there to see it, shot from her ladyship's eyes as she turned the portfolio on its right side towards her, and she read in their gilt lettering the words, "*Estelle Russell.*"

"I never would have believed it!" ejaculated her ladyship, after five minutes' silence.

"Believe what, Lady Vivian?"

Lady Vivian declined to reply. After another five minutes' silence, during which she appeared to meditate deeply, she lifted the portfolio from her knee to the table, laying it down in such an ungente manner that the marble bust tottered and fell to the ground. Mrs. Vivian looked up with a cry of alarm at the sudden crash.

"Oh, Lady Vivian! How did you manage to throw it down? One of my poor son's treasures, and such a pretty thing too!" And she went down on her knees to pick up the marble.

"Dear, dear!" she cried, with tears in her eyes, "see, the neck is broken in two places; and even if mended, the join will always show. And it must have been a valuable work of art, or else my poor dear Louis would not have kept it so carefully."

"I dare say he did not value it half so much as he did the original," said my lady, with glittering eyes. She had not absolutely intended to throw it down, but she had a curious, indefinable pleasure in seeing it lie broken at her feet, this poor bust of Muriel's, "*La Tristezza*," just as

indefinable and just as real as Mrs. Vivian's distress at seeing it.

"If it is but a copy, it belonged to *him*, remember," said Mrs. Vivian. She replaced the broken pieces on the table, and walked out of the room.

Left to herself, my lady sat down and cried heartily. This revelation of her dead husband's secret heart stung her to the quick through the dense garment of indifference and selfishness with which she had clothed herself for so many years. She had not cared for his love, such as it was. She had scorned it, and left it to die its natural death. But to know that he had loved some one, long and faithfully, at once gave a value to that second, quiet kind of love which might have been hers had she chosen: gave it a value, because it might have been—had she but known—a stepping-stone to the place this other woman held in his heart.

"A man who could love one woman all that time was a man whose love was well worth trying for. I remember now, how oddly he behaved when he saw that ugly old portfolio. Of course *that* was why I never got it back again. How could I have suspected? He never once alluded to his having been in France, or having known those Russells. If I had only known—" and here her ladyship's sobs ceased for a moment, and her red eyes looked decidedly vixenish—"I would never have let him and Estelle be together as they were at Pau. I've no doubt they were both glad to get rid of me. And how dreadfully sly she must be, for all her proper behavior! dreadfully sly and cunning, that I should never have had the slightest inkling of her liking for him!

"It was too bad; too bad!" she cried, relapsing into tears again at the remembrance of her own beauty in contrast to Estelle's pale, thin face. "Horrid little thing! I hate her! And I'll pay her out for this," was her ladyship's last utterance, as she seated herself before her writing-table.

CHAPTER XLIX.

JEALOUSIES.

BEFORE the end of January Lady Vivian was settled in her temporary home, a house on the Toulouse road, less than a mile from Château Montaignu. If the comte and comtesse had been the confidants of my lady's secret object, they could hardly have furthered it better than in hiring that house for her. It was near enough for intimacy, yet not too near. The grounds communicated with the château grounds, so that my lady might pay or receive visits, formal or friendly, as she thought fit. The house was arranged with that mingling of splendor and discomfort which English people feel so acutely when living on the Continent in places not generally patronized by their countrymen. Lady Vivian felt the difference between Toulouse and Pau most vividly in this respect. But she did not vex herself over the matter as she would have done had she come to Toulouse for simple change of air and scene. By the very fact of her coming abroad she had defeated her mother-in-law's fondest wishes; she had taken the children out of their grandmother's way, and consequently broken up

the influence Mrs. Vivian had flattered herself she was gaining over their young minds. Mrs. Vivian thought it was most improper for her daughter-in-law to go into a Popish country in her present circumstances. It was all very well when her husband was alive; they went for his health, and his being with her was quite sufficient protection. But now there was no such reason; and her plain duty was to stay at Vivian Court, and look after her children, and the poor, and the schools which Sir Louis had founded.

Having made up her mind to go abroad, Lady Vivian took a quiet pleasure, while her arrangements were in progress, in overturning, one by one, her mother-in-law's arguments in favor of seclusion within the precincts of the Court. If she must go to France, why not go back to Pau, where there was respectable English society and an English church? No. She would not go to Pau, and she would not go into English society, as long as English society required her to hide her hair under a horrid widow's cap. As for the English church, she didn't want to be bothered with English clergymen abroad; it was quite bad enough to have the rector prosing for hours about his schools and his choir when she was at home. Besides, the Pau clergyman was evangelical, and she was sick of the evangelicals. No, she had made up her mind to go to Toulouse, and to Toulouse would she go! She wanted to attend high mass in the cathedral again, and to see the ceremonies in holy week, and the assembly of clergy on Easter-day. It was fifty times better than going to the theatre; Mrs. Vivian might take her word for that. Was she unprotected? Pshaw! Was she not in the deepest mourning that Jay had got in his whole shop? *Minus* the cap, of course!

Of course! Might she beg as a particular favor that Mrs. Vivian would say no more about that cap? A confidential servant? No, indeed! confidential servants were one's greatest plague on the Continent. They were always grumbling about their food; they turned up their noses at omelette and claret, and sighed after English beef and English ale. She should take no servants whatever with her. The Montaignus would put half a dozen into the house, and she would add to the number herself if occasion required.

As Sir Louis Vivian had not expressed any wish or opinion on the subject of his wife's residence after his death either by his will or by word of mouth to his mother, Mrs. Vivian, having delivered her testimony, could do nothing but shake her head and purse up her lips whenever the subject was broached. She confided some of her fears to Dr. Vandeleur, but he only stared, and then laughed good-humoredly. The idea of the Jesuits of Toulouse getting hold of his pleasure-loving sister-in-law and turning her into a nun was too comical to be treated with gravity. He suggested in pure fun that Mrs. Vivian should go as guardian and detective; he would himself have offered to undertake the office, but unfortunately was not gifted with a capacity for scenting out Jesuits in disguise. This proposal, made in joke to Lady Vivian, was rejected with scant courtesy by her ladyship. No, she said fiercely, it was enough to have Mrs. Vivian's company thrust upon her in England. Abroad she declined it absolutely.

With her own hands Lady Vivian packed up

the marble bust. One of the first things she did, when settled in her new abode, was to have it repaired, and placed in her room while a proper pedestal was being prepared for it. It stood, harmless enough, in a dark corner. There my lady left it, till circumstances should favor its production. She could well afford to wait for such a dainty morsel of revenge as its recognition by Raymond de Montaigu as his wife's likeness promised to be.

So, waiting for this favorable combination of circumstances, winter passed and spring came with its violets and its forget-me-nots, and still Lady Vivian waited, because the time had not yet come for revealing her secret. A little more, and she would be sure of Raymond. She was not sure yet. She knew he admired her; she knew she amused him; she had succeeded in her utmost exaction of gallant attention; but she had never once succeeded in making him tender. And she could not fathom the meaning of his manner to his wife. Meanwhile she rode with him nearly every day; and if Estelle made a third, she seemed a very shadowy third indeed beside Lady Vivian's full dark eyes, scarlet lips, and ever-ready laughter.

Poor, silent, pale creature! My lady almost pitied her at times; never more than when she surveyed herself contentedly in her mirror after one of these rides with Raymond, wondering—nay, she wondered fifty times a day—what either the English baronet or the French count could ever have seen to like so much in that miserable-looking, ghost-like Estelle.

For the matter of that, Raymond's face was miserable enough when no one saw it. Yet it would have taken an intellect tenfold more subtle than Lady Vivian's, and a heart a hundredfold tenderer, to fathom the meaning of his manner to his wife. Even the Abbé d'Eyrieu, with all his affection for them both, could not do it; could only see with grief that something there was, something terribly wrong between the two. If he could have conjectured which was in fault, he might have ventured by virtue of his office to speak to that one; but there all his experience was at a loss. What d'Eyrieu saw, all the world saw—studied deference on the wife's side to the husband's will; studied courtesy on the husband's side towards the wife: neither ever failing in either respect to the other. But the defect—the want of fusion—which made these two, who should have been one, as completely two as if no bond had ever existed between them, could not fail to be visible, in spite of the effort of husband and wife to keep their misery sacred from the world's cruel eye.

It was the unacknowledged difficulty of this effort which had made them tacitly agree to remain at the château instead of spending the winter season in Toulouse. "I am not strong enough for visiting," Estelle said, and Raymond considered that quite a sufficient reason to give his mother, when she inquired what they meant by staying out in the country when carnival had begun.

"And you are going to sacrifice yourself for her? What next?" cried madame.

"Why not, *ma mère*? Besides, I have my occupations; I shall have no time to be dull."

"Do you intend publishing another book? I thought you had given up that vulgar fancy."

"I believe I have for the time," Raymond answered.

Comtesse Octavie took her daughter-in-law to task without fail on the first opportunity. "What do you mean by thus secluding yourself?" she asked. "Are you going to turn pious? When I was at your age I was in the zenith of my beauty. I danced all the carnival through, and was as fresh on Mardi Gras as I was on New-year's Day. Ah! I did enjoy my youth!"

Estelle smiled. "I do not think I shall ever dance again," she said with a look at her black dress, and a sigh as sad as the smile.

Comtesse Octavie gave a grunt of displeasure. "What your purpose is in wearing that dress, Heaven knows. You can't dance in it, of course; custom forbids. Take my advice, change it for something more cheerful; and perhaps the wish to dance will come back. At any rate, both your husband and myself would cease to have the sad reflection forced continually upon us, that he has lost his only child, I my only grandchild."

Estelle made no reply; the time was past when she had to enforce silence on herself during her mother-in-law's taunts. But, in spite of her seeming apathy, they stung her; only she did not feel the sting till afterwards.

Easter came, and with it the countess dowager. Unhappy as she had been all through the winter, Estelle wished the time back again, as the old weary attempt began on her part and on Raymond's, towards keeping up appearances before people.

She began to be afraid now to remain half the day in her retreat in the disused apartment above the chapel, lest her mother-in-law's indomitable curiosity should ferret her out, and wonder and comment should be stirred up all through the château at her choosing such an owl's nook. And again, this effort at outward unity only showed how terribly far apart husband and wife had drifted from each other during those few winter months.

This Raymond felt: and he it was who suffered now the more acutely of the two.

The anger which had at first predominated had died out; he had ceased to stigmatize to himself as a cruel fraud Estelle's whole conduct during their married life. He found himself regarding it from quite another point of view; and now distinguished in it a certain nobleness of character, and in her confession—late as it was—a wonderful loyalty, to which he had been blind before.

Thinking thus of her, his own conduct under the circumstances seemed far removed from the heroic. He remembered certain stinging speeches addressed to Estelle in his first outburst of wrath and disappointment; remembered these, and the looks and tones which had accompanied them, with as tingling a sense of disgrace as if he had been struck on the mouth with his own weapon.

He saw now, how by his want of self-command and forbearance he had insured defeat beforehand in what might yet have been the highest object of his life, namely, keeping intact that trust in him which she had shown by the very fact of her confession; and winning back the love she had given once, by compelling her gratitude. In a noble mind such as hers, gratitude was a plant bearing no niggard fruit.

But the golden opportunity had been lost

through his petulance. Instead of making her grateful, he had only raised the spirit of resistance in her. He longed as much now, as then, to know, though he dared not ask, whom she had loved so long and so hopelessly. Had he abstained from asking, or even had he met her refusal in a different manner, on how widely different a footing might they be with each other now!

But it was too late. Estelle was not one of those spaniel-like women whom their husbands may cuff and kiss at will, always sure of the same loving looks, the same grateful demeanor. She had never stooped to wheedling or coaxing in any form, neither could she be wheedled or coaxed. She was one of those quiet, apparently fragile natures in which silence covers an intensity of feeling which rarely exists in those whose emotions find easy utterance.

She was one of those women whose tenacity of memory never fails; who neither forget nor forgive. If she had not been able to forget her old love, more surely still she would never be able to forgive her husband's reception of her avowal of it.

Taking this for granted, Raymond, in accordance with his old habit, tried an anodyne. Study and business had both failed as anodynes hitherto, perhaps because his wife was so intimately associated in his mind with both. But Estelle was not even remotely associated in his mind with Lady Vivian, and gradually the custom grew upon him of passing an hour almost daily in her ladyship's society.

As for intention, he had none. When Lady Vivian first came there were a thousand and one things which required alteration and amendment about the house, and she had chosen him as her interpreter-in-chief. The place was as nearly perfect now as a temporary sojourn could be, but the habit had grown upon him of walking through the gardens to say "good-morning," and to inquire *miladi's* commands; and *miladi* was handsome and *piquante*, and amused him. That was all.

Estelle, much against her will, had been spending an afternoon with Madame Fleury, and was returning to the château. As soon as the carriage got within sight of the grounds, she alighted, and desired old Jean-Marie to drive on, as she would walk the rest of the way by the private path.

This path skirted the grounds for half a mile, being in fact the boundary between the Montaignu demesne and the piece of land belonging to the house rented by Lady Vivian. Estelle walked on, marking in an absent manner the burst of leaf by the wayside, and the long slanting light the setting sun cast on the wet meadows; marking it, but not enjoying it, for her mind was full of other things, and her mood was a very bitter one.

Madame Fleury's one intention in persuading her to spend that afternoon with her had been to inform her of certain reports which she conceived Estelle ought to know. Her house was a complete emporium for Toulouse gossip, and she might have unconsciously exaggerated the reports in transmitting them; but Estelle felt that she was too kind-hearted to have invented them, and she had found it very hard to keep an undisturbed countenance while good Madame Fleury disburdened

herself of what she avowed had long been weighing heavily on her mind.

The sum of her disclosures, and the head and front of Estelle's offending, appeared to be—first, that she had withdrawn herself from the Protestant circle; secondly, that she had left off her attendance on the temple services; thirdly, that she was supposed to be on the point of turning Catholic, or, if not, that she was become an atheist, like her husband.

"And," concluded Madame Fleury, "they do say too, my dear young friend, that you and your husband are not on good terms."

Estelle had sat quite quiet, determined to hear all Madame Fleury had to say, since she had let her begin. But at this last speech her endurance suddenly gave way.

"It is well that my husband is not here to hear you say that!" she cried, with a sudden burst of indignation, and a blaze of defiance in her eyes that avowed Madame Fleury, and made her wish, too late, that she had held her tongue.

"Who dares to say this?" Estelle went on, with her heart beating to suffocation, but steadfast in her determination to keep her own and her husband's secret. "Who dares say this wicked thing? If it is a man, tell him to keep out of Raymond's way. But no, it is only women who can be so mean and so cruel: it is only women who can stab each other so!"

"My dear young friend, don't take it so to heart," whimpered Madame Fleury: "of course I never imagined it to be true. If I had, do you think I should have told you?" she added naively.

"Of course, madame, I don't think you would spread such a report, or believe it either," Estelle went on. "But now, will you contradict it formally? That is what I have a right to ask you, now I have heard of it. Ah, madame,"—and here she spoke, with a simple, natural earnestness, because she felt she was speaking the truth—"you can little know how good my husband is to me: nobody can ever know except myself. If I do not visit the Protestants," she went on, resuming her indignant tone, "neither do I visit the Catholics; my health is not strong enough to admit of my entering into society. As for the temple, I always considered myself free to go or to stay away as I chose; I stay away now because I am weary of the heat and the long services. I am not going to turn Catholic, nor atheist either." Do you wish to tell me any thing more?"

"I know," said Madame Fleury, with much inward trembling, "that our pasteur is coming to see you—about—about this."

Estelle's face lit up with scorn. "Coming to take me to task, is he? Let him! My husband will be at home."

She had fought bravely for Raymond when she would have had neither strength nor courage to fight her own battle against Toulouse gossip; but now the reaction had come, and she felt physically too exhausted to be glad at having convinced Madame Fleury. Weary and heart-sick, she sat down on a stone and cried bitterly.

The lengthening shadows warned her at last of the necessity of hastening home. She rose, and proceeded as far as a bend in the path where a rustic bridge over the ditch led up to a gate opening on Lady Vivian's lawn. She turned to look as she passed. A gleam of yellow light shone

through the trees, and lit up the side of the house visible at the end of the path. Suddenly she moved a step nearer the gate, and stood transfixed, with eyes wide and lips growing whiter and whiter as she looked. Then, turning, she ran like one pursued, and never stopped till she reached the side entrance to the château.

This was what she had seen in the gleam of yellow sunlight—her husband bending over Lady Vivian's beautiful hand till his lips touched it, and my lady smiling down on him.

Just a few steps behind, hidden by the bend in the path, the Abbé d'Eyrieux saw it too.

Estelle had not known till that moment how deep below her resignation to her husband's cold displeasure lay the hope that after long expiation he might love her again. It had been this hope that gave her strength to live, not the obtuseness which comes of suffering, and which makes good and evil alike to us, for all capacity that remains for feeling either.

Just so much of hope remained after what she had seen as to rouse her to resistance. She ordered Lisette to get ready two of her prettiest colored dresses; she would leave off black to-morrow. "And, Lisette"—she hesitated, and her cheek flushed for one instant—"I can't bear to see myself such a pale ghost any longer; I have half a mind to rouge."

The hint was more than enough for Lisette. That night the box lay on the dressing-table, for her mistress to make what private experiments she chose upon her cheeks.

"Lady Vivian wishes to ride to-morrow," Raymond had said to his wife, "and I have asked her to lunch with us; I suppose you have no objection?"

"None whatever," said Estelle, with a flash in her eyes which might have made Raymond ponder somewhat, only that he was examining the pattern of his dessert-plate when he spoke.

"Have you invited any one else?" she inquired, looking full at him.

Something in her tone made Raymond look up this time, and their eyes met. His fell. "No one," he answered. "Why? If you have any engagement, you can put Lady Vivian off; her coming to-morrow is quite indifferent to me. I only asked her—because—because—the place she wants to see to-morrow is rather far, and if we set off from here we shall save a mile."

It was true; and yet Raymond felt his cheek burn as he spoke, and would have wished his wife's eyes fixed anywhere rather than on his face at that moment.

"I have no engagement and she may as well come as not. We neither of us seem to care much about it," Estelle said steadily.

Never had her mistress been so hard to please, thought Lisette, as she dressed Estelle on the morning. A dozen times had she asked the question, "How am I looking?" and still was dissatisfied with the maid's answer. Yet she had scarcely ever looked lovelier than when she entered the drawing-room a few minutes before Lady Vivian's arrival. Her dress, a rose-colored, airy fabric, floated round her like a cloud; her white hands sparkled with rings; a delicate pink flush tinged her cheeks, and she flashed by Raymond like a vision. For one moment he gave himself up to pure wonder. Her whole being seemed to have undergone a sudden trans-

formation; she moved hither and thither with restless, birdlike movements; her eyes flashed and her nostril dilated with some occult emotion. All that was statuesque in her had been put off with her black dress.

Raymond looked, turned away, and looked again, wondering more and more. An irresistible longing came over him to make her speak. She was looking out of window. He approached, saying:

"Are you watching for *miladi*?"

"No," she answered, looking round. "I leave that to you."

Suddenly, as he looked, a suspicion darted into his mind which made him stagger and turn giddy for a moment. Why had she thus laid aside her mourning for the child without a word? Why had she put on such a lovely dress? Why had she thus adorned herself in her jewels? Why, above all, did she look so animated, so lovely, to-day of all days?

"Who are you watching for?" he demanded, with a jealous longing to tear off her jewels—his jewels—from her! in which she had decked herself for some one's pleasure—not her husband's.

"I?" she answered, in some surprise. "For no one. Must one be watching because one looks out of window? I was wondering how long before the westeria would flower; it is very forward this year."

As she spoke, she left the window and seated herself on the sofa, with—oh, rare vanity!—a side-glance at the pier-glass as she passed; Raymond, holding a book upside down, watching her all the while with black looks.

Thus Lady Vivian found them.

No Circassian beauty was ever examined more critically by an intending purchaser than was Lady Vivian's face and figure by Estelle, while apparently engaged in doing the honors to her guest. Lady Vivian was unconscious of the survey. She was occupied to the full extent of her powers in exacting Raymond's sole and undivided attention; a harder task than she had thought possible the day before. She did succeed at last, and Estelle sat breathless, watching the undisguised flirtation, and blushing deeper than her rouge with anger at Lady Vivian's audacity.

"Do you intend riding this afternoon?" Raymond asked his wife, as they rose from table. Then, anticipating her answer, "Ah, no, of course; it would be a pity to miss any chance of seeing visitors in that enchanting toilet."

Estelle's head rose proudly, and she turned away. All she understood was that he did not wish her to come, and that he was sneering at her dress—had seen through her rouge, perhaps. Sick at heart, though outwardly calm, she ascended the stairs leading to the oriel window over the entrance; the horses had been brought to the terrace-steps, and she could see them mount without their seeing her. Lady Vivian's light laugh rang out, more discordant to Estelle's ears than a magpie's screech. She could hear by the tone of her voice that she was banting her husband; that she was in high good-humor. She made her horse caracole, and Raymond stood and looked on admiringly. Well he might, for Lady Vivian's habit fitted her superbly, and the long black plumes that fell over the brim of her hat gave her complexion and eyes even a higher tone of brilliancy than usual. In short, if Raymond had

not been insanely jealous of his wife at that moment, he would have felt a most unalloyed pleasure in squiring so fair a dame. As it was, he was thinking, all the time that he stood admiring Lady Vivian, what possible pretext he could invent for getting home an hour earlier than Estelle expected him.

Standing at the window, Estelle watched them ride away; thinking, as her eyes followed him down the avenue, "It is no use trying to win him back. It is too late. And—whatever I may think about her style—she is a magnificent woman. Oh, Raymond, Raymond, surely my punishment was hard enough without this!"

"Ah, so there you are, contemplating your work," said a harsh voice behind her. Madame had been standing at a farther window, hidden by a curtain.

Estelle turned, repressing a nervous start; she had imagined herself quite alone.

"What do you mean, madame?" she said, coldly, to her mother-in-law.

"Look down there, and you will see," Comtesse Octavie replied, with a sardonic smile. "They are very good friends, those two, are they not? I am not surprised; and mind, I don't blame my son. Mark my words, daughter-in-law," she continued, laying no gentle hand on Estelle's wrist—"mark my words: *you have changed your black dress a day too late.*"

Estelle felt as if under the influence of some deadly fascination. Madame's grip hurt her, but she made no attempt to withdraw her arm. "Does not *she* wear a black dress too?" she asked, still straining her eyes at the two dark specks in the distance.

"Are you a fool?" madame hissed between her teeth. "Can you not see that she has life, vivacity of feature, coloring, a certain way with her; every thing, in short, that you have not? Are you such a fool as not to see that? Bah! I have no patience with you!"

And flinging her daughter-in-law's wrist away with a gesture of contempt, madame left the gallery.

CHAPTER L.

LA TRISTEZZA.

ALTHOUGH Lady Vivian had been too much occupied with the husband to notice how closely she had been watched by the wife, the sudden change in Estelle's dress had not escaped her ladyship's observation, nor was her penetration at fault in discovering its motive.

"Poor silly little thing!" she thought, as she rode along; "she has discovered at last that black suits neither her face nor her figure, and she is trying to compete with me? She had actually rouged herself for the occasion! I wonder if her husband noticed it. Poor creature! she might as well own herself vanquished at once, whether he did or not. There is nothing so attractive as a fine color, when 'tis genuine, that's certain," mused her ladyship with a feeling of thankfulness that the rouge-box was not—what at one period of her life she had feared it must become—a *sine quâ non* of her toilet.

My lady was not sorry that Estelle had perceived her flirtation; the knowledge that the young comtesse was vexed gave it a zest which

had hitherto been wanting. She had felt sure of Raymond since the day before; that *besamanos* was undeniably tender, without being tiresomely so. When people became too tender they were always tiresome, Lady Vivian thought—witness foolish Herbert Waldron, who would have compromised her if she had not known what she was about. But in the midst of my lady's self-satisfaction the thought would obtrude itself, that Estelle did look very pretty—so pretty that it was just as well that she had progressed already so far with the husband, or else the flirtation might have been nipped in the bud. Now, however, she might bring matters to a crisis as soon as she chose, and the sooner the better.

A violent shower of hail, coming on suddenly when they had ridden ten minutes beyond her house, seemed to point favorably to the hurrying on of the disclosure. They hastened back, the horses were put up, and they adjourned to the drawing-room to wait till the shower was over.

Raymond watched the hail driving against the window-panes with a sense of pleasure. He hoped it would go on long enough for Lady Vivian to propose putting off their ride, and he would be free to gallop back to the château and see what his wife was doing. Was she still looking out of window watching the growth of the westeria? He crushed the handle of his riding-whip as if it been a helpless human wrist while he sat replying to my lady's banter.

My lady did her best to amuse him, but found it a more difficult task than she had bargained for. At length, as a last expedient, she took up her embroidery as a means of showing off the beautiful hands which had met with so much appreciation the day before. The artifice succeeded for a moment. Raymond could no more help admiring a beautiful hand than he could help admiring any other beautiful thing; and these were perfect to the finger-tips. So he left off chafing in secret at his detention, and looked and admired and made compliments, wishing that he were a Titian to immortalize such a pair of hands for the latest posterity. Lady Vivian's eyelids bent down over her embroidery in sweet complacency, and her face expressed extreme satisfaction. She was quite accustomed to hear her hands praised; and she knew as well as Raymond did that they were beyond criticism.

She let them do their work, disdaining to help by so much as a glance from her downcast eyes: rejoicing in the thought that the fingers so innocently and so deftly drawing the needle in and out of the stuff were weaving a web of fascination round the man who, a few years ago, had not deigned to look at either her face or her fingers, so absorbed was he in his love for poor silly Estelle Russell.

How long Raymond might have been content to gaze at Lady Vivian's hands is not certain, but my lady, knowing that it is the manner of mankind to tire of even a lovely object if too long set before their eyes, suddenly dropped her work, expressed the liveliest interest in the weather, and proposed their adjourning to the conservatory, from the farthest window of which they could see what chance of sunshine there was for the afternoon.

Raymond rose and followed her, wishing—now the spell was broken—that an ominous line of black might stretch over the weather quarter,

in which case Lady Vivian, intrepid horsewoman as she was, would certainly choose the shelter of her own drawing-room for the rest of the day.

"Now I think of it," said my lady, as they walked across the room together, "I want to ask your opinion about my gold and silver ferns. I feel sure the gardener has put them into wrong earth; at any rate it is quite different to what they use at Vivian Court, where the ferns are really magnificent. I spoke to him, but of course, as I'm a foreigner, he will have it he knows best. Now if you speak to him he'll be sure to listen to you. I'll send a message to him."

She left the drawing-room by another door, while Raymond walked in the direction of the conservatory.

There was a small room serving as a passage of communication between the drawing-room and the conservatory; a sort of nondescript apartment, generally half-filled with plants and littered with the children's toys and garden hats. It had been cleared of these encumbrances, and now contained only half a dozen azaleas grouped round a pedestal which supported a marble bust, a table with some old books and a portfolio, and an inlaid cabinet. Raymond noted the improved arrangement of the room at a glance, and walked straight up to the piece of sculpture, which was placed facing the door, with its back to the light.

No one who had seen Estelle could fail to trace the likeness. With a suddenly-awakened interest Raymond went up to examine the face more closely.

"La Tristezza," he repeated, reading the gold lettering at the base of the sculpture. "La Tristezza. Yes, it is well named. She does look like that sometimes."

"What of the weather?" cried Lady Vivian from the drawing-room. "Ah!" she continued, approaching him, "the likeness strikes you as it did me when I saw it first."

"I did not know my wife had ever been modelled except once," said Raymond; "how odd she should never have mentioned it to me! This is far better than the bust I had done of her in Paris. This is more spiritual, without losing the likeness. Do tell me where you got this, Lady Vivian, and how long you have had it."

"Ah," said Lady Vivian, passing her handkerchief gently over the marble, "thereby hangs a tale."

"Tell it me."

"N—no; I think not. Let us see whether it is going to be fine at last," she added, stepping into the conservatory.

"There is some mystery, and I hate mysteries," said Raymond following her. "Will you not have pity on the humblest of your slaves?" he added, with a gesture of mock entreaty. "Will you not give me a clue to the secret?"

"You really desire it? Rash man, beware! Before I have done telling, you may detest me for weakly granting your request."

"Detest! As if you ever could do or be any thing but what is charming!"

"That remains to be seen," said Lady Vivian, dropping her eyelids pensively. "No. Really, I can not make up my mind to tell you; I do not know how much pain I may cause. And yet—do you indeed ignore all, *all* the story connected with this bust, and this, and this?" she asked, indicating with her hand the portfolio and

the cabinet, and throwing into her voice and attitude a semblance of uncertainty and anxiety which was not without its effect on Raymond.

"I never saw or heard of either till now," said he. "But," he added, and his tone showed Lady Vivian that he was thoroughly in earnest now, "if I ask my wife, doubtless she will tell me what she knows—if she knows any thing at all about it."

"No, no, no!" cried Lady Vivian. "Poor dear Estelle! You must not ask her, indeed you must not, count. You will? Nay, then, I must forget my own feelings, and tell you. You know, perhaps"—and here my lady's handkerchief went up to her eyes for a moment—"that Estelle knew my husband years ago?"

"No. I never heard of it!" Raymond replied, with a sudden change in his face which did not pass unnoticed by Lady Vivian. She went on—

"Nor did I; I had not the least idea of it till just when I was leaving England. I don't know why; but this cabinet always had rather the effect of a Bluebeard's closet on me. I never asked to see it—ah, you need not look so—I never did see it, for my husband always wore the key round his neck. Judge of my surprise when, on the cabinet being forced open in the supposition that it contained papers, we found this bust and this portfolio, an old portfolio of Estelle's; see, there is her name stamped on it. That and the marble bust told me—ah, need I tell you what they told me?" Lady Vivian concluded, burying her face in her hands.

"You forced me to say it," she said presently, glancing at her companion's face. "You forced me to say it, and, now I've said it, you hate me," she went on. "Ah, that is just the way with you all!"

Raymond stopped her.

"Quite the reverse, *miladi*," he said, very gravely. "I thank you for what you have told me. I was in error. I shall be so no longer."

"I accept your thanks," Lady Vivian replied. "I ought to be glad, certainly, that I have not hurt any one except myself. There are some things one can not call to mind without suffering: this is one of them. I must have my ride, *coûte qui coûte*, or I shall not sleep all night after this," she went on, approaching the window.

The weather was obstinately clearing, Raymond saw. There was no escape, no excuse possible. Five minutes later they were in the saddle, riding in the direction of the waste land skirting the river, on the border of the Montaignu estate.

Raymond's face was a puzzle to Lady Vivian. "I see you have not forgiven me for telling you," she said, after watching him for some moments in silence.

"On the contrary, I repeat that I thank you," was his reply. And they rode on for some time without another word.

Lady Vivian would not have felt so pleased at her afternoon's work had she guessed what the set look of Raymond's face concealed; what terrible remembrances were goading him; what remorse; what utter despair; but, beyond all, what a longing to throw himself at his wife's feet and confess his unworthiness, though with no hope of pardon! That, indeed, was farther off than ever. How would she ever forgive him for

asking *who she was watching for?* He had betrayed his base thought too clearly. His look and tone had supplied the paucity of words. Fool, brute, that he was, to set down her change of dress and look and manner to an unworthy motive! He remembered with deepest pain how many and many a time he must have stabbed her tender heart through and through; he recalled how he had brought the news of Sir Louis Vivian's disappearance, the finding of his horse and his pocket-book, and the description of the marks of torn-up roots and grass on the side of the terrible slippery rock. He recalled Mrs. Russell's shriek, the crowding in of the servants, the screams of Lady Vivian and the children, and his own wife's silence through it all. He had thought—and he hated himself for the thought—that she was so silent, so shamefully insensible to the horror and grief around her, because she was absorbed in sorrow at parting with her lover: because she regretted having parted with him; regretted perhaps that she had respected her husband's rights. And all that while she was keeping a dead man's secret! Brave Estelle! noble beyond a woman's nobleness! Such a love as hers was worth dying for, as Sir Louis Vivian had died.

CHAPTER II.

DARKEST BEFORE DAWN.

LONG after madame had left the gallery, Estelle stood looking at the red mark her mother-in-law's bony fingers had left on her arm. The mark died away after a while, but the cruel words rang still in her ears, and were echoed back from her heart, whose instinct had told her the same beforehand.

"She has life, coloring, vivacity; in a word, every thing you have not. You have changed your black dress a day too late."

She had said the same to herself, and yet if madame had not spoken in her cruel, cutting manner, Estelle would have gone on trying to cheat herself, trying to hope for a day when her husband's heart might turn to her again.

There was an old-fashioned Louis Quinze mirror at one end of the gallery. She went and stood before it, and examined herself as she would have examined a picture.

"It is pretty, surely," she thought. "But only thanks to the coloring, only thanks to the rouge and the dress. I need not try to cheat myself or him either. He saw the rouge, no doubt. Men's tastes change, I suppose. He thought my face perfect once. Ah, me! I'll never, never try again, let him love where he will."

She turned to go. A tearless sob escaped her lips as she passed through Raymond's study—the shortest way to her own boudoir. There were books and papers littered about as usual. Once it had been her task to arrange these. Now she would have as soon thought of touching a stranger's papers as Raymond's. Her feeling as she passed through was that she had no business there. She had long since ceased even keeping up his fire by stealth.

"Too late! too late!" she muttered, as she entered her own room. Lisette entered immediately after, to say that M. le Pasteur Cazères was in the drawing-room.

Estelle considered a moment whether she had nerve enough to face him. She knew his errand, and had said confidently to Madame Fleury, "that he might come and say what he pleased, for her husband would be at home." Rash confidence!

"I can see no one," she cried, "while I have on this hateful rouge! It was all a mistake, Lisette, although you meant for the best when you advised my trying it. I could not tell till I had tried, of course, but I'll never put it on again. Make all proper excuses to Monsieur le Pasteur; beg him to stay till he is rested, but say that it is impossible for me to see visitors to-day."

"As madame pleases," Lisette answered. "I can, however, assure madame that she need not decline seeing any one because of that touch of rouge. I hoped madame had more confidence in me than to imagine I should allow her to leave this room unless her face was arranged so as to defy detection."

Great was Lisette's mortification when, on her return from delivering her message in the drawing-room, she found that not only had her mistress effaced all traces of the rouge, but that she had resumed the black dress Lisette hoped she had seen her wear for the last time, and that all her ornaments lay strewn on the table.

"I like my black dress best," she said, in answer to the maid's exclamation of disappointment.

With something of the same instinct which sends a wounded animal to its lair, Estelle sought the disused room above the chapel. Contrary to her fears, Madame de Montaigu had not yet found out that she had made that part of the château her haunt. Chance might befriend her still, at least for this afternoon. For the tears would have their way at last. And her heart was sore and sad enough without her mother-in-law's sarcastic comments or ironical consolations.

Walking slowly up and down, Estelle remembered a time when she had wished that the dismantled suite of rooms of which this was one might be hers, instead of her beautiful bridal apartments below, which were like a gilded prison with Raymond for its jailer. That had been her wild mad wish in the first feeling of despair after reading Louis Vivian's mislaid letter. She remembered how she had longed to be freed from the thralldom of her new husband's love; how hateful his caresses were; how she had forced herself to endure them.

What would she not have given for even a kind word now!

Half blinded with crying, she crept down stairs to the chapel. It had never been used for service since her father-in-law's death. The spiders had spun their webs across the candlesticks on the altar, and the dust lay thick on the carved wood-work. It was desolate, but not so desolate as the room above. For, dominant over the wish for solitude, now rose the human instinct, the longing for human sympathy and companionship; and over the altar hung a picture of the Mater Dolorosa: looking at it might in some measure satisfy the longing for sympathy which could never be set at rest altogether. For human friends to give their sympathy, they must know something of the cause of sorrow: and this sorrow Estelle knew she would have to bear all her life, and never tell it to a human being.

It crossed her mind that Mary the Blessed, the

Mother of Sorrows, might perhaps, were she on earth now, be such an one as she would dare ask for sympathy; herself a woman through whose heart a sword had likewise pierced.

Many and many a time had Estelle, on a visit to some church for the sake of examining its architecture, seen how a woman would enter Mary's chapel with a face all marred with crying; how she would kneel and tell her trouble to the dear Madonna; and after a while dry her tears, and go away hushed and comforted. She thought Madonna had heard her story, and that comforted her, whether she helped or not.

A fancy, say. But surely a comforting fancy were better than such deadly isolation. The fancy was irresistible for a moment. It led her to a spot where the picture seemed to look down upon her with kind, sad eyes, and mute, gravely listening mouth. She began to murmur words to it, as she did sometimes—poor lonely soul!—when gazing at one of the many portraits she possessed of her dead child.

But a rain-cloud obscured the sun, and veiled Madonna's face. The mute friend was gone: in its stead a dull, dark canvas in a dusty frame. The rain and hail descended with force, and the wind whistled mournfully in the vaulting of the roof. The lugubrious noise and the sudden gloom together overpowered Estelle. She sank down on the marble altar-step, and wept like one distraught.

"Ah," she cried, "my burden is more than I can bear! Give me back my husband, or let me die!"

Suddenly she heard a sigh. She started up, trembling.

Dripping with the rain, the Abbé d'Eyrieu stood in the doorway.

"Daughter, what brings you here?" he asked, advancing towards her.

In the surprise of the moment she could not frame an answer. The priest placed a chair for her, and sat down himself. She endeavored to speak, but when she looked up, and saw his eyes fixed upon her—eyes as kind and sad as those of the picture—her voice failed, and she could only weep. Silently the priest rose, and knelt before the altar till the sound of her weeping had ceased. Then he returned to his seat, and spoke again:

"I wondered, daughter, to see you prostrate before the altar."

"I was in trouble—I—I scarcely knew what I was doing," Estelle replied.

"This trouble—is there no earthly remedy for it?"

"Do you think I would have lain weeping there on the stones had I known of a remedy? There is none—none!"

"Your tone implies despair, not resignation. I am acquainted with your trouble, and have not ceased since from praying for you."

Estelle looked at him in mute surprise for one instant, and then buried her burning face in her hands. Even that the kind, pious, silent abbé should have guessed her secret made her tremble all over with shame and humiliation. But how had he guessed it? Had she said any thing, thinking herself alone?

"Daughter," he continued, "a woman should never despair of winning back her husband's love, unfaithful and unworthy though he be."

"What did I say? What did you hear?" she

whispered, beyond measure distressed and mortified at having somehow involuntarily betrayed herself. The priest might be silent, but he knew. And that was too much.

"Daughter, you have said nothing. What I saw told me your trouble, not what I heard."

She looked up. He nodded his head gravely, saying, "I saw it."

"You saw it?" Again she hid her face in her hands. Raymond's shame was hers. She could not bear to face the priest. She would have willingly hid herself from his sight. But he sat on, still looking kindly and sadly at her.

Suddenly she looked up. "Father," she said steadily, "I can not explain how things have come to this pass. It is enough that they are so, and that there is no help for it. But, father, you must never think that Raymond has been in the wrong all along. And he—he always loved me better than I deserved."

"Daughter, you believe, do you not, that I love you both? If you explained yourself more fully, could I not help to bring about a reconciliation?"

Estelle shook her head. "Raymond must come back to me of his own free will, or not at all; I can have no go-betweens. I must not even speak to you of myself, because I could not help also speaking of him, and I know he would not choose that; and—and—I am bound to do what he approves of always, as far as I can—am I not? So I can never speak of this to you or to any one, unless he bids me do so. And that will never be!" she added, sighing.

The priest was silent. His good offices had never been rejected with such decision before, and he felt disappointed, and slightly hurt, although he could not but respect Estelle's motive.

But in a moment he rebuked himself. Why should he think so much of what he could say or do? He desired a reconciliation; he, to be sure, saw no other peacemaker except himself. But what if God should see fit to bring back peace between these two without his help? Was it for the servant to direct the Master?

He was silent but for a moment; but Estelle, divining some part of what was passing through his mind, said,

"You must not be angry, dear abbé, because I refuse your help. But indeed you could not help me. I know Raymond so well—so much better than you do—that I feel sure I am right. But I feel grateful for your kind wish, believe me. And I thank you, too, for praying for me," she added.

"And that I can still continue doing," d'Eyrieu replied.

"Thank you," she said simply, putting her hand in his.

It was wet and cold.

"Ah!" she cried, "you have been sitting here wet all this while, and I never thought of it. Trouble has made me sadly selfish. Come up stairs to my rooms, and let me make you comfortable."

D'Eyrieu did not refuse. He knew that the best thing for her was to be roused to action. What she did mattered but little, so long as it was something that kept her from brooding over her trouble.

Soon she had him sitting by a blazing fire. She brought refreshment, and served him with her

own hands. "Ah," she said, "I am glad that you happened to take shelter in the chapel. I like doing something for somebody, particularly for you. Are you quite sure you are warm now?"

"Not quite. My old bones take longer to warm than yours: but I shall be warm soon." And Estelle went down on her knees, and piled on more logs.

"I am giving you more trouble than I intend, madame," said the abbé, looking on.

"I like doing this, for you," was the answer.

Presently, seeing that she could do nothing more to make him comfortable, she sat down on the other side of the hearth and took up her work—a piece of knitting. The priest sat silent, enjoying the blaze, and observing her while she worked. From time to time a slight quiver passed over her mouth and chin, as one sees in the face of a child which has cried itself to sleep. It grieved d'Eyrieu to see this, and to see the marks of long weeping in her swollen eyelids. He feared her falling back into her usual unhappy frame of mind when the momentary interest of his visit should have passed off. Suddenly a bright thought struck him. He would give her something to do for him, which would require a little time.

"You don't seem very anxious to finish that work," he said. "Is it for a friend? What is it?"

"It is a chair-cover. I don't want it, and I don't know any one who would care to have it. I do it because I get tired sometimes of being quite idle."

"I had a pair of cuffs," said d'Eyrieu, "but they have disappeared." The truth was, he had given them away to an old woman whose hands were disabled from rheumatism. "I should be so glad of another pair to keep my wrists warm. Will you knit me a pair?"

"Ah," she cried, her face brightening, "why did you not ask me before? I will begin a pair for you this very moment."

She ran to her work-table drawer and pulled out her wools. "What color shall they be? Not purple, I suppose? Gray? Wait a moment. I think I have a ball that will just do in my boudoir."

She left the room to fetch it. She was scarcely gone when old Jean-Marie appeared at another door with a disturbed and anxious face, and beckoned the priest with his hand.

D'Eyrieu rose and followed him into the ante-chamber.

"Heaven have pity upon us all!" stammered the old servant. "They sent me on before to tell Madame la Comtesse, and I dare not. Monsieur le Curé, you will do it better than I. Tell her—Monsieur le Comte has had a terrible accident—a fall from his horse. They are bringing him home on a door, Monsieur le Curé, and if he is alive, that is all that can be said; for the great beast of a horse rolled over him. It appears that he attempted to leap the torrent down by the dike, so the English lady said, and the bank had been undermined by the rains, and gave way. And as I said, the horse, poor brute, not from malice—for the creature has a good heart and loves its master—but, however, it did roll over Monsieur le Comte as he lay there, and he is fearfully injured."

The priest signed to him to stop. Estelle stood at the opposite door.

"Go on," she said to Jean-Marie. "Who is fearfully injured?"

Jean-Marie hesitated.

"You are afraid to tell me? Then I know it must be my husband. Tell me where he is, that I may go to him."

"They are bringing him home," said the old man, "but oh, madame, do not go to meet him. Madame will be so shocked to see monsieur's face. Even I, who am only his servant, could not bear to look."

"Where is he? Which way are they coming?" was all she said.

"By the lower road. It was shorter and less stony."

For an instant the thought of all the bodily suffering overcame her, and she sank down on the nearest bench. But before they could offer assistance she looked up again, calm and self-possessed, though she still trembled.

"I must not give way now. I must be strong—while—while my husband wants me. Have you sent some one to fetch a doctor? You have sent the carriage? Yes, that is well, Jean-Marie. Monsieur l'Abbé, will you come with me? I am going to meet my husband."

CHAPTER LII.

NEW LIFE.

For many a long wakeful night and many a weary day had Raymond to submit himself to the stern teacher Pain—a teacher from whom there was no escaping, who must needs be listened to. At last, when spring was gone and the fierce summer of Languedoc was in its glory, he rose in the strength of renewed life, with a new hope and a new fear.

For the wife, whose gentle tendance had soothed him even in delirium, whose love had shown itself by a thousand acts of foresight, of forbearance, of tender intuition of his wants, now that all danger was past, drooped and failed as if every life-spring in her were dried up.

During the long night-watches, looked down on only by the stars through the open window, husband and wife had each made sweet confession to the other. Long she sat, her hand fast locked in his, each filled with a feeling that was half joy, half pain, but altogether sacred. For they knew now, that come what come woe, their two souls were one; and that henceforward neither could drink either of the cup of joy or of the cup of sorrow—no less sacred—without the participation of the other.

"I do not grudge you one thought of the past," said Raymond, after a long silence. "Why should I? But for that past I could not know your nobleness, my own Estelle. Only, when you are looking back, let me look too. Do not grudge me that, at least. Ah, my love, why shake your head? Do you fear jealousy still? Never fear that, love, while I have all the future. How long may it not be? Are you afraid of growing old, love?"

"I have not thought of growing old," she answered, "since I found out you loved me. I did feel afraid of growing old alone. But now,

as long as I have you, love, I can not be afraid. Yet I have some marks of age upon me already; gray hairs are coming thick upon my temples, Raymond."

"I will pluck them out by-and-by, and have them made into a jewel to wear upon my heart. Bend down that I may kiss them, dearest."

She obeyed. Presently he spoke again: "I think—bear with me, even if you do not understand;—remember how for years I had thought you all mine—mine from the first blush of your girlhood—I think, dearest, that the sharpest pang of all, after your telling me *that* (perhaps it was because you refused my kiss) was the thought that the cheek which I had imagined so peculiarly mine own had been touched by another: that your lips—ah, do not start away—I tell you I grudge neither him nor you one moment of the Past—"

"Oh!" she cried, "have you thought so all this while? Raymond, will you never know me?" Her voice trembled with indignation.

"One more misconception!" Raymond sighed. "Dear, forgive me. I will try to know you; will spend all my life in trying. Yet I think I never shall, except so far as you unveil yourself to my coarser apprehension. I thought I had begun to know you so well; could tell each fold of your heart; and, behold, I am a tyro still. Be patient with me, love."

She would be patient, she promised. But for learning her heart, he must read it by his own, and take time for it; they had a lifetime for the task.

And gradually, as one thing after another was unfolded to him, Raymond learned how ignorant he had been of woman, most of all of Estelle, the one woman whom he believed he knew best.

He was in a convalescent state now, and had been removed to his wife's boudoir as a first change before venturing into the open air. Estelle was lying down in a dark room; now that the night-watching was no longer necessary her strength gave way with the slightest exertion.

Tired of reading, and wishing for companionship of some sort, Raymond was not sorry when Jean-Marie presented himself to pay his respects and congratulations on his master's recovery.

"Give me your arm," said Raymond, "and let me try to get round the room. That will be an event to tell madame of when she comes in.

"Twice round; that must do," said he, sitting down on the first chair that came to hand. "So far so good. But what a strange thing it is to feel so weak. Thanks for your firm arm, Jean-Marie."

Jean-Marie smiled and bowed low. Was there aught else he could do for monsieur?

"Bring me a hand-mirror from my dressing-room; I want to see whether the kick that brute gave me in the face is likely to leave much of a scar. I know he kicked me more than once in his struggles to rise."

Jean-Marie hesitated for an instant, but the old habit of obedience prevailed, and he brought the hand-mirror and handed it silently to his master.

Raymond looked for one moment, and then dropped it with a shudder and exclamation of disgust.

The pain he had suffered had made him think

it likely that there was great injury; but he had not been told to anticipate lasting disfigurement. He had so little expected it himself, that, since the cessation of the pain, he had not once thought of asking the question. Confident in that, as in all else, he had never once contemplated the possibility of the personal beauty he had prized so much vanishing forever.

"Is it possible?" he thought aloud. "That scarred face all I shall ever see when I look at myself? Take the glass away, Jean-Marie, I have seen enough."

"But that is nothing, nothing at all," Jean-Marie exclaimed, with every wish to make the best of a bad matter. "A mere bagatelle to the state monsieur's face had been in. Now it was improving daily, monsieur might look again in a week. There was a time, when monsieur was at the worst—that was when Madame la Comtesse would let no one but herself be in the room when the wound was dressed. Yes, I came in," said Jean-Marie, with a pleasant grin, "but I'm an old soldier, and can look at almost any thing; though madame beats me, *sacrebleu!* As for the rest, poltroons one and all; men and women, monsieur's valet, monsieur's mother, chicken-hearted, every one of them. And truly the sight was not pleasant. Madame la Comtesse used to faint sometimes—in the next room, you know—not while monsieur wanted her, not she. She was a woman who would have faced Moscow for the sake of one she loved. One would say that it was monsieur's mother that had the bravest heart, but it appears to be all the contrary; for Madame la Comtesse Douairière had entered monsieur's room one day when he was very ill and did not know her, and her maid said she had frightful hysterics afterwards."

Raymond laughed. That, then, had been the reason why his mother had had such an urgent necessity for visiting her property in the Basque country. He understood now the meaning of his wife's smile when she read aloud once a letter from his mother, full of her anxieties for her dear and only son, and dilating on the misery of the sleepless night she had passed, because Estelle, worn out with watching, had missed writing in time for the post one day.

"Is the English lady still in the neighborhood?" Raymond asked.

"Did not monsieur know? Madame had probably not remembered to tell him. The English lady was gone; had been gone some time. She had sent down a large case to the château, directed to monsieur, before her departure. It still remained in the courtyard; madame had not opened it."

Having answered these inquiries, and seeing that Raymond seemed inclined for silence, the old man left the room.

Estelle entered presently, and her quick eye discovered that something had disturbed her husband.

"My dearest, what is it? Have you been fatiguing yourself? Why are you so flushed?"

"I have been talking with old Jean-Marie," Raymond replied; "and thinking, love."

"But I will have neither the one nor the other," said Estelle, anxiously, "if it makes you so feverish. What can he have said?"

"Nothing that can hurt me; much that will do me good. Oh, my love," he added, taking

her hand, "I wish you had not such an ugly fellow for a husband!"

"What has that stupid old man been telling you?" she cried, with tears in her eyes.

"I made him bring me the mirror," Raymond replied. "There it lies, you see. It told me quite enough. I am sorry for my own sake, still more for yours, love."

"As if I ever gave it a thought, or ever could," she cried, "except that it reminds me of all the suffering you have endured, my poor Raymond!"

"One thing Jean-Marie told me," Raymond continued, drawing his wife closer to him, "which I find you know already, but which was great news to me. Lady Vivian is gone, and has left me a parting present, which has not yet been removed up stairs. We will have it up one day and open it together. Can you guess what it is, *mignonne*?"

"I thought I guessed," Estelle said, "if it was only from what you let fall one night when you did not know me. Ah, Raymond, I hope I shall never pass such a terrible night again!"

A week after the package was unfolded in Raymond's presence, and was found to contain, as he had conjectured, the marble bust and the portfolio of his wife's drawings.

"I am glad these are no longer hers," Raymond remarked, pointing to the portfolio; "but I shall not call them mine, Estelle, till you give them to me. Will you write and thank Lady Vivian for me?"

Lady Vivian was in Paris when she got Estelle's letter. Her ladyship turned it over and over, with as keen and uncomfortable a sense of failure as ever she had experienced in her life.

"She has got round him somehow," her ladyship reflected; "that is very clear; but I did not think he had been so easily gulled. She told some falsehood, of course, and with that meek white face of hers he took it all for gospel; and more fool he!"

Pushing Estelle's letter from her with contempt, Lady Vivian took up the *Times* of the day before, and glanced down the first page. If Estelle's letter had affected her disagreeably, what she read now was any thing but calculated to soothe her. At the head of the list of marriages stood the announcement of her sister Lizzie's marriage with Herbert Waldron.

"To think of their hurrying it on like this, instead of waiting, as papa had said they should! I know—I know that girl did it on purpose; she thought there would be no chance for her after I left off my mourning, and so she made sure of him before I came back. I never—never knew of any thing so mean, so sly, so underhand! To get it all done without saying a single word to

me!" cried her ladyship, bursting into a violent fit of weeping.

After two such defeats, what remained to her but hysterics and bed? Of these resources Lady Vivian availed herself. We may leave her there, hoping she has made up her mind to the inevitable.

CHAPTER LIII.

TWO YEARS AFTER.

THE Abbé d'Eyrieu was sitting silent and solitary, as was his wont, when the postman's knock was heard, and Pétronille brought in a letter, with the usual illegal request for two *sous*, on account of the Presbytery lying so far out of his beat.

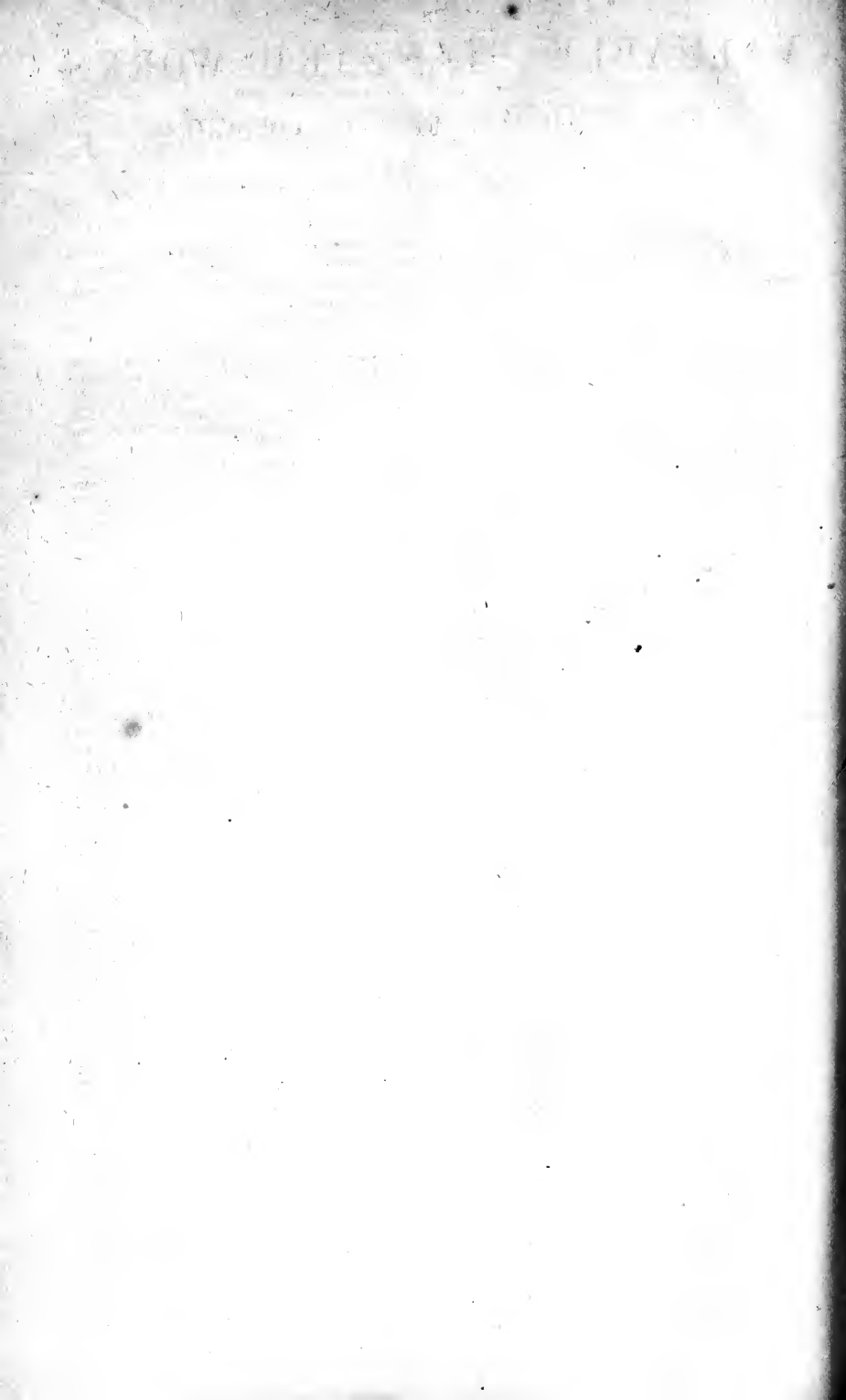
The two *sous* were forthcoming; the servant departed to have her gossip with the postman, a rare visitor; and the abbé broke the seal.

"From the Holy Land!" he muttered, crossing himself. "Surely, ah, surely, if his heart can be opened to the truth, it must be there!" With an inward prayer, he began to read.

"Here we are," Raymond wrote, after detailing their travels, "fixed for a time in the Holy City. I confess frankly to you, old friend, that many things seem clear to me which, before I came to this land of Palestine, were either beyond the scope of my comprehension or out of the pale of my sympathy. I say I think that here, in the country where He whom you call Master dwelt, I have a better chance of appreciating his life and work than in the capital of civilized Europe. It is possible I have hitherto not been in the mind to appreciate it. It is possible that there is such a thing as hyper-civilization in the France which you and I both love. I shall think over all this, and not be in a hurry. Meanwhile, do not take what I have written for more than it is worth.

"And my wife? You will like to know that the roses oftener visit her cheeks than not, and that she is indefatigable in collecting flowers for you. Yesterday, during our ride, she commanded me to get off my horse no less than three times to pluck flowers—all for you. It is needless to say with what alacrity I obeyed. She bids me tell you that she is finishing a miniature expressly for you of our boy—a most wonderful boy, you believe of course—a boy whom his mother avers never to have cried since he was born. I think I could tell a different tale: but no matter.

"My wife also bids me say, that you will be interested in knowing that our boy was baptized in water of the Jordan: also that she is carefully keeping a flask of the precious liquid for you. And also—But with so many messages, she had better take the pen herself; therefore, for this time I bid you adieu."



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And siller ha'e to spare,
E'en ye'll consent to be his bride,
Nor think o' Donald maistr."

Oh, wha wad buy a silken gown,
Wi' a puir broken heart?
Or what's to me a siller crown,
E'en frae my love & part?"

CHAPTER I.

OVER, AND SAFE.

"I AM gathering myself together for a great leap, Jack."

"Don't look so sad about it, then. Take it as you would one of your Berkshire fences, Harry, with a firm seat and a cool hand."

"If I only knew what was on the other side, Jack—that bothers me."

"By the way, did you hear of the dinner at old Thornhill's on Tuesday? I declare, every body was drunk but the dogs, and they were turned out at night to find their way home by themselves. The squire got very, very bad—port and brandy alternately—tumbled twice off his horse before he got out of the gate; and then, half an hour after, when the rest of us rode home, we found him sitting in the middle of the road, in the dark, trying to ward off the dogs that had gathered round him and were for licking his face, while he hiccuped to them 'G—go away, my good people—g—go away—I've really nothing for you; 'pon my soul, I've forgot my p—purse.' But what's the matter, Harry? You haven't heard a word of my story, and you're looking as glum as a parson."

"Jack, I'm going to marry."

"Don't be a fool."

"I am, though. It's all over with me, Jack. I told you I was gathering myself together for a great leap."

"Who is it, Harry?"

"Annie Napier."

There was an interval of dead silence. Mr. John Palk was too prudent a man to hazard a hasty witticism, knowing as he did the somewhat fiery temperament of Harry Ormond, Marquis of Knottingley.

"Do you mean that, Harry?"

"I do."

"You're in luck, then, lad. But what a host of rivals you'll have blaspheming you! Why, all London is at Miss Napier's feet. Lord Sotheby and I went to see her last night—the people in the pit were half crazy about her. And when we went round to Millington

House for some supper, Sotheby swore he'd give his soul to the devil for a hundred years to get an introduction to Annie—I beg your pardon—to Miss Napier."

"Fellows like Sotheby are rather free in offering their soul to the devil," said Harry Ormond with a sneer, "because it is the thing of least value they have about them, and because they know the devil will have it for nothing by-and-by."

"If you marry Miss Napier, Harry, you'll be killed in a month. I tell you, man, London won't stand it. Why, they say that the Prince himself—"

Ormond started to his feet—his face scarlet, his eyes hot and angry.

"By God, I will drive a sword through the man who breathes that lie in my hearing!"

"Don't scowl at me, Harry. I don't believe it."

"Do I care a straw who believes it? But we needn't waste angry words, Jack. I have known Annie Napier for years; and our family has been rather celebrated for its jealousy. If I, an Ormond, marry that girl—people may conclude that there will be no longer a market for their scandalous wares. And mind you, Jack—don't you talk of it to any living soul; for I haven't even asked her yet, but she or nobody, will be my wife."

John Palk went home to order supper for a little party of card-players who were to meet at his house that night, and Harry Ormond had promised to call in during the evening—that is, the card-playing evening, which began when the men got home from the theatre.

Ormond was himself at the theatre that evening. From his box he sent round the following note to the lady who, at that time, held London captive with the fascination of her genius and her personal loveliness.

"DEAREST ANNIE,—I shall await your coming home. I have something particular to say to my little sister. H. O."

He was alone in the box; and he sat there alternately entranced by the sweet tones of the voice

he loved and enraged by the thought that all this houseful of people were sharing a satisfaction which by right belonged to him alone. When they applauded—as they did often and vehemently, for Miss Napier was the idol of the time—he scowled at them as though they were insulting the woman whom he hoped to make his wife. He resented their rude staring as an indignity visited upon himself; and when, at the end of the act, they turned and talked to each other about the great actress, his family passion drew dark meanings from their smiles and whispered conversations, and his heart burned within him. A night at the theatre was not a pleasure to Harry Ormond. He left so maddened by love and jealousy that he became a joke to his companions—behind his back, be it understood, for he had a quick temper and a sure eye with which the wits did not care to trifle. Harry Ormond was not a man to be provoked or thwarted lightly; and in this period of contrariety, disquietude, and gusty passion which falls, in some measure or other, to the lot of most young men, a discreet avoidance of irritating topics was the course which wisdom dictated to Lord Knottingley's friends. Not that he was a sullen boor or bravo, eager to tread on any man's corns, and kill him for swearing. He was naturally light-hearted, fickle, generous; impulsive in every mood of affection or dislike: and, at this time, when these uncomfortable love-measles were strong upon him, he as often quarrelled with himself as with his neighbors. He was sensitive and proud; he was naturally jealous; his sweetheart, worse luck, was an actress; and it was a time, as some of us can remember, when scandal was cultivated as an art. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Harry Ormond suffered all the tortures, while enjoying few of the amenities of love.

That night he was sitting in Miss Napier's house alone and moody. He had an uneasy feeling that the strength of his passion was forcing him to a step from which his calmer reason might otherwise have caused him to shrink. He had not sufficient self-criticism to know that his impulsiveness, under these circumstances, might hereafter beget all the mutual miseries of inconstancy; and yet there were vague forebodings in his mind. He crossed the room, which was very prettily furnished and brilliantly lit, and leaning his arms on the mantel-piece, proceeded to study a small and daintily-executed miniature which hung against the wall. Was he trying to trace in these calm and beautiful features his own destiny; or was he wondering how his passion might alter the future of her whom he loved so much; or was he bitterly thinking that this portrait, like the original, was but a thing at which all men might gaze as well as he?

At that moment the door was opened, and there entered the actress herself, flushed with the evening's triumph, and smiling a happy welcome to her friend. That first glimpse of her sweet face settled the matter—there was no more

doubt, no more regret, possible. And as it was not in the nature of the man to prepare his utterances, or use any discretion in choosing them, he at once went forward, took her hands in his, and looking into her face with a sad earnestness, uttered his complaint and prayer.

"Annie, I can not bear your going upon the stage any longer. It is a monstrous thing—a degradation—I will not have it. Listen to me, Annie, for your own dear sake; and tell me you will never go back to the theatre any more. You are my little sister, are you not? and you will do what is best for yourself and me, my dearest? How can I bear to hear the women talk of you—how can I bear to see the men stare at you—and such men and such women, Annie! You do not know what they say and think of actresses—but not of you, Annie! I did not mean that—and so I beseech you, darling, to do what I ask you; will you not?"

Her eyes fell.

"And what would you have me do *afterward*?" she asked in a low voice.

"Be my wife, Annie; there, I have told you! Look in my face, my dearest. You know I have loved you always; trust me now."

"Trust you!" she said looking up with wet eyes; "you know I trust you, Harry. Whom should I trust but you?"

"And you say—?"

"I say I will do any thing for you, Harry, except that—any thing except that," she said with a white, downcast face and trembling lips. You have been too good to me, Harry; you have given me too much of your love and your kindness, for me to let you do such a thing. It is for your sake only I refuse. You remember when you said you would always be a brother to me; and I was thankful within my heart to hear you say that; and after having been my dear brother and my friend for all this time, do you think I would make such a poor return for all your love as to let you marry—an actress? I will leave the stage if it will please you; I will lie down in my grave, if it will please you, and be happy enough if I knew you wished it. I will do any thing for you, Harry; but not that—not that!"

Wherewith he caught her in his arms, and kissed her—passionately, despairingly.

"My angel, my dearest, are you mad to talk in that way? Do you not see that the great favor would fall upon me only? Is there a woman in all England to be compared with you, my queen, my darling? What matters your being an actress to me? It is you, not the actress, whom I beg for a wife; and if you would see in what way I should ask you for so great a blessing—here at your feet I kneel, you an empress, and I your slave."

And so he knelt down before her, and took her hand and looked up into her eyes. That may have been the fashion in which lovers spoke in those days, or it may be that the strong passion of the young man thrilled him into using stage language. But there could be no doubt about

the absolute sincerity of the words; and the girl, with a sort of sad, wistful pleasure in her face, heard his urgent prayer.

"See, Annie, am I low enough? For God's sake do not mock me by saying you can not be my wife because you are an actress. You are to me the noblest and tenderest of women; and there is nothing I hope for but your love. What do you say, Annie? Will you not speak a word to me?"

She stooped down and gently kissed away the tears from his cheeks.

"I am ashamed of your goodness, dear," she said in her low, intense voice, "and I wish you had not asked me. But oh! Harry, Harry, how can I hide that I love you with my whole heart!"

She placed her hand on his soft brown hair—that hand which half London would have died to have kissed—and looked for a moment into his love-stricken eyes. In that brief moment the compact was sealed between them, and they were thenceforth husband and wife. She uttered a few words—rather indistinctly, to be sure—of farewell; and then she lightly kissed his forehead, and left the room.

He rose, bewildered, pale, and full of an indescribable happiness; and then he went down stairs, and out into the open air. There was a light in her bedroom as he turned and looked up; and he said—

"I leave my heart in her dear keeping, for good or ill."

Shortly afterward he made his appearance in Mr. John Palk's rooms; and by that time there was nothing on his face but a happy, audacious trust in the future; an expression which immediately struck one of his friends who was seated at one of the small tables.

"Harry Ormond, come here," said this gentleman. "I see you bring good luck in your face. Back me!"

"I will, Wriotheshy. A hundred guineas on Lord Wriotheshy's next hand!"

"Done with you, Harry," said Mr. John Palk; to whom a hundred guineas was an acceptable sum, now that he had managed by aid of ace, king, and queen (with occasional help from a racing favorite) to scatter one of the finest estates possessed by any private gentleman in England.

As it happened, too, Lord Wriotheshy and his partner won; and Mr. Palk made a little grimace. At a sign from Ormond, he followed the young marquis into a corner, where their conversation could not be overheard.

"You'll have to take paper, Harry," said Palk.

"What do you mean?"

"The hundred guineas—"

"Confound your hundred guineas! Sit down, and listen to me. I am an expatriated man."

"How?" said Mr. Palk, quietly taking a chair.

"Miss Napier is going to be my wife; and I know she will never have the courage to con-

front my friends—rather, I should say, I shall never allow her to sue in any way for recognition from them. You see? Then I shouldn't like to have my wife brought face to face with people who have paid to see her; and so—and so, Jack, I am going to give up England."

"You are paying a long price for wedded happiness, Harry."

"There I differ with you, Jack. Now I want you to help me in getting up a quiet little wedding down in Berks; for I know she will never consent to meeting my relatives and all the riff-raff of my acquaintances—"

"Thank you, Harry."

"And I am sure she will be glad to leave the stage at once, if that is possible."

"What a pace you have! You're at the end of every thing when other people are thinking of the beginning. But, in good faith, Harry, you are to be congratulated; and you may rely on my services and secrecy to the last."

And to Harry Ormond it seemed as if all the air around him were full of music.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOOK BACK.

How still the lake lay, under the fierce heat! The intense blue of it stretched out and over to the opposite shore, and there lost itself in the soft green reflection of the land; while the only interruption of the perfect surface was a great belt of ruffled light stirred by the wind underneath the promontory of Spiez. Then overhead the misty purple mass of the Niessen; and beyond that again the snowy peaks of the Schreckhorn, Mönch, and Jungfrau glimmering through the faint and luminous haze of the sunlight; and over these the serene blue of a Swiss sky. Down in front of the house, the lake narrowed to the sharp point at which it breaks suddenly away into the rapid, surging, green-white waters of the Aar; and at this moment, as seen from the open window, two men in a low flat boat were vainly endeavoring to make head against the powerful current.

At the window sat a little girl of about four years old, with large, dark gray eyes, a bright, clear face, and magnificent jet-black curls; a doll-looking little thing, perhaps, but for the unusual depth and meaning of those soft, large eyes. All at once she put her elbows on a tiny card-table opposite her, clasped her hands, and said, with a piteous intonation—

"Nu, Nu; oh, I don't know what to do!"

Her father, who had been lying silent and listless on a couch in the shadow of the room, looked up and asked her what was the matter.

"My doll is lying out in the sun," she said, in accents of comic despair, "and the poor thing must be getting a headache, and I am not allowed, Nu says, to go out just now."

"What a little actress she is!" her father

muttered, as he returned, with a slight laugh, to his day-dreaming.

And she *was* an actress—every atom of her. She had not the least self-consciousness; the assuming of appropriate speech and gesture was to her more natural than the bashful sense of personality with which most children are burdened. A true actress will smile quite naturally into the Polyphemus-eye of a camera; a false actress will be conscious of deceit even in dressing herself to have her portrait taken. This child of four had the self-abandonment of genius in her mimetic efforts. She coaxed her mother and wheedled her father with an artless art which was quite apparent; and her power of copying the tender phrases she heard used was only equalled by the dramatic manner in which she delivered them. The appeal to “Nu”—which was a contraction for “nurse”—was her invariable method of expressing intense despair. If her mamma reprimanded her; if she lost one of her toys; or if she merely felt out of sorts—it was all the same: down went the elbows and out came the pitiful exclamation, “Oh, Nu, Nu, I don’t know what to do.” This little girl was the daughter of the Marquis of Knottingley, who now lay upon the couch over there; and it is of her that the present history purposes to speak.

For Harry Ormond had been right in his surmise. The young actress begged him not to insist upon her meeting his friends and acquaintances; and he, to whom no sacrifice was then great enough to show his gratitude for her love, readily consented to go abroad after the quiet little ceremony which took place down in Berkshire. They went to Thun and lived in this house which lay some short distance from the village, overlooking the beautiful lake; and here Lord Knottingley forgot his old world, as he was by it forgotten. His marriage was known only to a few, though it was suspected by many, and coupled with the unexpected withdrawal from the stage of Annie Napier. In the end, however, the matter dropped into oblivion, and Harry Ormond was no more thought of.

For several years they lived there a still and peaceful existence, varied only by an occasional excursion southward into Italy. The halo of his romantic passion still lingered around his young wife; and in the calm delight of her presence he forgot old associations, old friends, old habits.

“You can not expatriate a married man,” he used to say, “for he carries with him that which makes a home for him wherever he goes.”

She, too, was very happy in those days. She could never be persuaded that her husband had not made a great sacrifice in coming abroad for her sake; and she strove to repay him with all the tenderness, and gratitude, and love of a noble nature. She simply worshiped this man; not even the great affection she bore her bright-eyed, quaint little daughter interfered with the one supreme passion. To her he was a miracle of all honorable and lovable qualities; never

had any man been so generous, heroic, self-denying.

And yet Harry Ormond was a weak man—weak by reason of that very impulsiveness which often drove him into pronounced and vigorous action. As he leaned back on his couch, after hearing the pathetic complaint of his little daughter, there were some such thoughts as these vaguely flitting before him.

“She will be an actress, too; a real actress, not a made one, thank God. And if I take her back to England as my child, will not all the poor, would-be actresses of my acquaintance assume a fine air of patronage toward her and her mother? But, after all, Annie *was* on the stage—I can not deny it; and I can not quarrel with any body for reminding me of the fact. All the tipsy ruffians of the town have sat and stared at her—d—n them! And just as surely is it impossible that I can remain here all my life. Annie is very well, and very affectionate; but I did not bargain for a life-long banishment. And one might as well be dead as live always out of London.”

This was the first seed sown; and it grew rapidly and thrived in such a mind as his. He became peevish at times; would occasionally grumble over the accidents of his present life, and then took to grumbling at that itself; sometimes held long conversations with the small Annie about England, and strove to impress her with the knowledge that every thing fine and pleasant abode there; finally—and this process had been the work of only a week or two—he announced his intention of going to London on business.

His wife looked up from her work with dismay on her face; he had never proposed such a thing before.

“Why can not Mr. Chetwynd do that business for you also, Harry?” she asked.

“Because it is too important,” he said, a little impatiently. You need not fear so much my going to London for a fortnight.”

She went over to him, and placed her hand gently on his head.

“Am I too jealous of you, Harry? I hate England because I think sometimes you have still a lingering wish to be back there. But I do not *fear* your going; I know you will be as anxious to come to me as I shall be to see you.”

So Harry Ormond went forth from that house which he never saw again. His wife and daughter were at the window; the former pale and calm, the latter vaguely unhappy over an excitement and disturbance which she could not understand. As the horses started he kissed his hands to them both, tenderly as he had kissed them three minutes before on the threshold; and as the carriage disappeared round the first turning of the road, he waved his handkerchief. Annie Napier had seen the last of her husband she was to see in this world. She came away from the window, still quite calm, but with a strange look on her pale and beautiful face; and then she sat down, and took her little girl on her knee,

and put her arms round her, and drew her closely to her.

"Mamma, why do you cry?" she said, looking up into the sad, silent face.

Her mother did not speak. Was the coming shadow already hovering over her? She drew her daughter the more closely to her; and the little girl, thrown back on her usual resource for expressing her alarm, only murmured disconsolately, "Oh, Nu, Nu, I don't know what to do."

CHAPTER III.

THE MARCHIONESS.

OF what befell Harry Ormond in England—of the influences brought to bear on him, of the acquaintances and relatives who counselled him (if he did receive any counsel but from his own inclination)—his wife never knew any thing. Week after week passed, and she heard nothing from England. Again and again she wrote: there was no answer. But at length there arrived at Thun his lordship's man of business, Mr. Chetwynd, who brought with him all the news for which she had sought.

She was seated at the window overlooking the lake, oppressed and almost terrified by the strange shadows which the sunset was weaving among the mountains opposite. The sun had so far sunk that only the peaks of the splendid hills burned like tongues of fire; and in the deep valleys on the eastern side the thick purple darkness was giving birth to a cold gray mist which crept along in nebulous masses like the progress of a great army. Down at the opposite shore the mist got bluer and denser; and over all the lake the faint haze dulled the sombre glow caught from the lurid red above. Up there, high over the mountains, there were other mountains and valleys; and, as she looked, she thought she saw an angel, with streaming violet hair which floated away eastward, and he held to his mouth a trumpet, white as silver, which almost touched the peak of the Wetterhorn; and then the long flowing robes of scarlet and gold became an island with a fringe of yellow light that dazzled her sad eyes. When she turned rapidly, to see that a servant had brought her a letter, the same cloud-visions danced before her, pictured in flames upon the darkness of the room.

"Will it please your ladyship to see Mr. Chetwynd this evening or to-morrow morning?" the servant inquired.

"Did Mr. Chetwynd bring this letter?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Yes, your ladyship," said the man.

"Tell him I will see him this evening—by-and-by—in half an hour."

Standing there, with a faint pink light streaming in upon the paper, she read these words—

"DEAR ANNIE,—Things have changed greatly since I was in England before; and my present visit seems to have brought me back again

to life. It would be impossible for me to let you know how many reflections have been suggested to me since I came here; and perhaps I ought to go on at once to the main purport of my letter. You are my wife—*legally married*—as you know; and no one can deprive you of the privileges pertaining to your rank, any more than they can deprive you of my esteem and affection. At the same time you know how *very* exclusive my friends are; and I am *convinced* that for you to seek companionship with them would only bring you *discomfort* and *vexation*. Now your own good sense, my dear, will show you that I can not always remain away from England and allow my property to be left in the hands of agents. I see so many alterations for the worse, and so much *urgent need* for improvement, that I am certain I must remain in England for several years, if not for life. Now, my dear, I have a proposal to make which you will think cruel at first; but which—I know well—you will afterward regard as being the wisest thing you could do for all of us. Nobody here seems to know of our marriage; certainly none of my own family seem to take it for granted that I have a wife living; and if I were to bring you over I should have to introduce you with explanations which would be awkward to both you and me—which, indeed, would be *insulting* to you. What I desire you to do is to remain in the house you now occupy, which shall be yours; a sufficient income—to be named by yourself—will be settled upon you; and Annie will be supplied with whatever governesses and masters she requires. I hope you will see the propriety of this arrangement; and more particularly on account of one circumstance which, unfortunately, I am compelled to explain. You know I never allowed you to become friends with any of the English people we met in Italy. The reason was simply that they, in common with my relatives, believed that you and I were not married; and could I drag you, my dear, into the ignominy of an explanation? For the same reason, I hope you will conceal your real rank in the event of your ever meeting with English people at Thun; and while I wait your answer—which I trust you will *calmly* consider—I am, whatever unhappy circumstances may divide us, your loving husband,

"HARRY ORMOND."

She read this letter to the very end, and seemed not to understand it; she was only conscious of a dull sense of pain. Then she turned away from it—from its callous phrases, its weak reasoning, its obvious lies, all of which seemed a message from a stranger, not from her Harry—and accidentally she caught a glimpse of herself in a mirror. She saw there what recalled her to herself; for the ghastly face she beheld, tinged with the faint glow of the sunset, was terror-stricken and wild. In the next second she had banished that look; she rang the bell; and then stood erect and firm, with all the fire of her old profession tingling in her.

"Bid Mr. Chetwynd come here," she said to the servant.

In a minute or two, the door was again opened, and there entered a tall, gray-haired man, with a grave and rather kindly expression of face.

She held out the letter, and said, in a cold, clear tone,

"Do you know the contents of this letter?"

"I do, your ladyship," said he.

"And you have been sent to see what money I should take for keeping out of the way, and not troubling his lordship? Very well—"

"I assure your ladyship—"

"You need not speak," she said, with a dignity of gesture which abashed him—which made him regard her with the half-frightened, half-admiring look she had many a time seen on the faces of the scene-shifters after one of her passionate climaxes—"I presume I am still the Marchioness of Knottingley?"

"Certainly."

"And my husband has commissioned you to receive my instructions?"

"He has, your ladyship; and if you would only allow me to explain the circumstances—"

"Mr. Chetwynd, you and I used to talk frankly with each other. I hope you will not embarrass yourself by making an apology for his lordship, when he himself has done that so admirably in this letter. Now be good enough to attend to what I say. You will secure for me and my daughter a passage to America by the earliest vessel we can reach from here; and to-morrow morning you will accompany us on the first stage of the journey. I will take so much money from you as will land us in New York; whatever surplus there may be will be returned to Lord Knottingley."

"May I beg your ladyship to consider—to remain here until I communicate with his lordship?"

"I have considered," she said, calmly, in a tone which put an end to further remonstrance, "and I do not choose to remain in this house another day."

So Mr. Chetwynd withdrew. He saw nothing of this strangely self-possessed woman until the carriage was at the door next morning ready to take her from the house which she had cast forever behind her.

When he did see her, he scarcely recognized her. She was haggard and white; her eyes were red and wild; she appeared to be utterly broken down. She was dressed in black, and so was the little girl she led by the hand. He did not know that she had spent the entire night in her daughter's room, and that it was not sleep which had occupied those long hours.

So it was that Annie Napier and her daughter arrived in America: and there she went again upon the stage, under the name of Annie Brunel, and earned a living for both of them. But the old fire had gone out; and there was not one who recognized in the actress her who had several years before been the idol of London.

One message only she sent to her husband; and it was written, immediately on her reaching New York, in these words:

"HARRY ORMOND,—I married you for your love. When you take that from me, I do not care to have any thing in its place. Nor need you try to buy my silence; I shall never trouble you. ANNIE NAPIER."

On the receipt of that brief note, Harry Ormond had a severe fit of compunction. The freedom of his new life was strong upon him, however; and, in process of time he, like most men of his stamp, grew to have a conviction that he was not responsible for the wrong he had done. If she had willfully relinquished the luxury he offered her, was he to blame?

Ten years afterward, Lord Knottingley lay very sick. He was surrounded by attentive relatives, who, having affectionately interested themselves in him during his life, naturally expected to be paid for their solicitude at his death. But at the last moment remorse struck him. As the drowning man is said to be confronted by a ghastly panorama of his whole life, so he, in these last hours, recalled the old tenderness and love of his youth, which he had so cruelly outraged. He would have sent for her then; he would have braved the ridicule and indignation which he had once so feared; but it was too late. One act of reparation was alone possible. When Harry Ormond, Marquis of Knottingley, died, it was found that he had left, by a will dated only a few days before his death, his whole property to his wife, of whom nobody knew any thing, accompanying the bequest with such expressions of affection and penitence as sorely puzzled his lady-relatives.

Not for several months did the lawyers who acted for the trustees discover where the missing wife had taken up her abode in America; and then an elderly gentleman waited upon the actress to break the news of her husband's death, and to invite her to become the mistress of a large property and the wearer of a proud title.

"How pleased she will be," he had said to himself, before seeing her.

Once in her presence, however, he did not so hastily judge the tender-eyed, beautiful, melancholy woman; and it was with all the delicacy he could command that he told his story, and watched its effect upon her handsome, sad face.

But these ten years of labor had not quite broken Annie Napier's spirit. Out of her grief and her tears—for she was a woman, and could not help still loving the lover of her youth—she rose with her old grandeur of manner, and refused the offer. Not theatrically, nor angrily, but simply and definitely, so that the messenger from England, perplexed and astonished, could only beg her to think, not of herself, but of her daughter.

"My daughter," she said, perhaps rather bitterly, "will never seek, any more than myself,

to go among those people. God knows that it is she alone whom I consider in every thing I do. I have taught her to earn her own bread; and I will teach her that her only chance of happiness is to marry, if she does marry, in her own profession. You appear to be surprised, sir; but what I say to you is not the result of any hasty impulse. Have you seen her?" she added, with a touch of pride. "Have you seen her since you came over? Some years hence you may find her in England; and she will reap my old triumphs again."

"If you will only consider what you are taking from her—the position she would hold—the—"

For an instant the large dark eyes of the actress were filled with a strange, wistful look; was she striving—as we often do strive—to anticipate the current of years, and look over the long future lying in wait for this girl of hers?

"I have considered, sir, many a year ago. She has been brought up in perfect ignorance of her birth and name; and there is no one of her associates who knows our secret. So she will remain."

This unlooked-for termination to his mission so astounded the lawyer, that he could not at first comprehend the decision of her tone.

"You will understand, madam," he said, "that professionally I have no resource but to return to England with your message. But may I not beg you to reflect? Is it not possible that you have been moved to this decision by a—what shall I say?—a view of things which may appear natural to you in your professional life, but which is looked upon otherwise by the outside world?"

"You think I am led astray by theatrical notions of life?" she said, with a smile. "It was my experience of your 'outside world' which made me resolve that my girl should never suffer that which I have suffered. The resolution is a very old one, sir. But supposing that I should die, would she then have this property—would it belong to her?"

"Undoubtedly, if she chooses to accept it."

After a few moments' silence, the prudent and tender mother having calculated every possibility which might affect her daughter's happiness, she said to him:

"In that case, sir, I can always provide against her suffering want. I will give her to-day your address in England, and tell her that if at any future time I am taken from her, and if she should ever be in need, she can go to you; and then, sir, you will remember who Annie Brunel is."

"And you absolutely condemn your daughter to be an actress, when a word from you could make her an English lady—"

The woman before him drew herself up.

"When my daughter ceases to believe that an actress may be a lady, it will be time for her to apply to you for the rank she has lost."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACTRESS.

It was near midnight when an unusually notable and brilliant little party sat down to supper in the largest hall of a hotel in the neighborhood of Charing Cross. Brilliant the meeting was, for beneath the strong lights shone the long white table with its gleaming crystal, and silver, and flowers; and notable it was in that the persons sitting there were, every one of them, marked by an obvious individualism of face and dress. They were no mere company of cultivated nothings, as like each other in brain, costume, and manner, as the wine-glasses before them; scarcely a man or woman of them had not his or her own special character rendered apparent by this or that peculiarity of facial line or intentional adornment.

But there was one woman there—or girl, rather, for she was clearly not over twenty—whose character you could not easily catch. You might watch the expression of her eyes, listen to her bright, rapid, cheerful talk, and study her bearing toward her associates; and then confess that there was something elusive about her—she had not exhibited her real nature to you—you knew nothing of her but those superficial characteristics which were no index to the spirit underneath.

Slight in figure, and somewhat pale and dark, there was nevertheless a certain calm dignity about her features, and a stateliness in her gestures, which gave an almost massive grandeur to her appearance. Then her magnificent black hair lay around the clear, calm face, which was rendered the more intensely spiritual by large eyes of a deep and tender gray. They were eyes, under these long eyelashes, capable of a great sadness, and yet they were not sad. There seemed to play around the beautiful, intellectual face, a bright, superficial, unconscious vivacity; and she herself appeared to take a quite infantine interest in the cheerful trivialities around her. For the rest, she was dressed in a gleaming white *moiré*, with tight sleeves which came down to her tiny wrists, and there ended in a faint line of blue; and through the great braided masses of her black hair there was wound a thick cord of twisted silver, which also had a thread of blue cunningly interwoven with it. The artistic possibilities of her fine face and complexion were made the most of; for she *was* an artist, one of the few true artists who have been seen upon our modern stage.

This was Miss Annie Brunel, who in three months from the date of her arrival in this country, had won the heart of London. The young American actress, with her slight and nervous *physique*, her beautiful head, and the dark lustre of her eyes, was photographed, lithographed, and written about everywhere: people went and wept covertly beneath the spell of her voice; for once unanimity prevailed among all the critics who were worth attention, and they said that the new actress was a woman of genius.

Who could doubt it that had witnessed the utter self-abandonment of her impersonations? She did not come upon the stage with a thought about her jewelry, a consciousness of her splendid hair, and an eye to the critical corner of the stalls. On the stage, she was no longer mistress of herself. Her eyes deepened until they were almost black; her face was stirred with the white light of passion; and her words were instinct with the tenderness which thrills a theatre to its core. When the sudden intensity died down, when she resumed her ordinary speech and dress, she seemed to have come out of a trance. Not a trace remained of that fire and those intonations, which were the result of unconscious creation; her eyes resumed their serene, happy indifference, her face its pleased child-like expression. Swift, active, dexterous she was, full of all sorts of genial and merry activities; that kindling of the eye and tremor of the voice belonged to the dream-life she led elsewhere.

The supper was rather a nondescript affair, resembling the little entertainment sometimes given by an author on the production of his new piece. As the play, however, in which Miss Brunel had just appeared was "Romeo and Juliet," there was a little difficulty about the author's being present to perform the ordinary duties; and so the manager's very good friend, the Graf von Schönstein, had stepped in and offered to play the part of host on the occasion.

The Graf indeed occupied the chair—a large and corpulent man, with a broad, fair face, small blue eyes, red hands, a frilled shirt, flowered waistcoat, and much jewelry. He had made the acquaintance of Miss Brunel during the previous year in America, and lost no time in renewing it now that she had so suddenly become famous in England. Of the Graf, who it may be mentioned was once a respectable tea-broker in Thames Street, E. C., we shall hear more.

On the left of the chairman sat the manager, a middle-aged man, with gray hair and a melancholy face; on the right Miss Brunel, and next to her a young man of the name of Will Anerley, a friend of Count Schönstein. Then followed several members of the company, an elderly little woman who officiated as Miss Brunel's guardian, two or three critics, and a young man who spoke to nobody, but kept his eyes intently fixed upon a charming *soubrette* (with whom he had quarrelled some days before) who was wickedly flirting with Mercutio. There was no lack of jest and talk down both sides of the table, for the wine-glasses were kept well filled; and occasionally there rang out, clear and full, the mellifluous laughter of the nurse—a stout, big, red-faced woman, who had a habit of using her pocket handkerchief where a table-napkin might have been more appropriate—as she cracked her small jokes with Benvolio, who sat opposite to her. Then Friar Lawrence, who had thrown aside his robe and become comic, happened to jolt a little champagne into Lady Capulet's lap:

and the angrier she grew over his carelessness, the more did the people laugh, until she herself burst out with a big, good-natured guffaw.

Meanwhile the small clique at the upper end of the table was engaged in a conversation by itself, Count Schönstein appealing to the manager vehemently:

"Was I not right in begging you to give the public Miss Brunel's 'Juliet'? There never was such a triumph, Miss Brunel; I assure you, you have taken London by storm. And with the public satisfied, will the critics object? You will not see a dissentient voice in the papers on Monday morning. What do you say to that, Mr. Helstone?"

The man whom he addressed had forsaken the cluster of his brother critics, and was busily engaged in amusing the pretty *soubrette*, whom he had entirely drawn away from poor Mercutio.

"Why," he said with a faint smile, apparently bent upon puzzling the gorgeous-looking gentleman who had imprudently interrupted him, "I should be sorry to see such unanimity, for Miss Brunel's sake. Conscientious journalism, like every conscientious journalist, knows that there are two sides to every question, and will do its best to write on both. The odds will be the truth."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked the Count somewhat pompously, "that you have no more conscience than to advocate different things in different papers?"

"If I write what I know on one side of a subject in one paper, and write up the other side in another paper, I free myself from a charge of suppressing truth: and I—"

Whereupon the *soubrette* with the brown curls and the wicked blue eyes, pulled his sleeve and made him upset a claret-glass.

"What a clumsy creature you are," she whispered. "And what is the use of talking to that ridiculous old fool? Tell me, do you think Miss Brunel handsome?"

"I think she has the face of a woman of genius," he said with a glance of genuine admiration.

"Bah! that means nothing. Don't you think she shows her teeth on purpose when she laughs? and then those big soft eyes make her look like a baby, or like a sleepy Juno. Why do you grin so? I suppose I am not as handsome as she is; but I wonder if she could put on my gloves and boots?"

"You have adorable hands and feet, Miss Featherstone; every body allows that."

"Thank you. They say that every ugly woman has pretty hands and feet."

"Nature leaves no creature absolutely unprotected, my dear. Let me give you some Vanilla cream."

"You are a brute. I hate you."

"I have generally found that when a young lady says she hates you, she means she loves you—if you have a good income."

"I have generally found that when a young lady rejects her suitor because of his want of

brain, he instantly says she cast him off because of his want of money. But I wish you'd keep quiet, and let me hear what Mr. Melton is saying about next week. If he thinks I'll play the people in with a farce, as well as play in the burlesque, he is mistaken. However, since you people have taken to write up Miss Brunel, she will order every thing; and if the poor dear thinks seven too soon for her nerves after tea, I suppose she will get played whatever she wants."

"Spiteful thing! You're thinking of her handsome face and eyes and hair: why don't you look in the mirror and calm yourself?"

The little group at the head of the table had now split itself into two sections; and while Count Schönstein talked almost exclusively to Mr. Melton, Miss Brunel was engaged in what was apparently an interesting conversation with Will Anerley, who sat next her. But a patient observer would have noticed that the stout and pompous Graf kept his eyes pretty well fixed upon the pair on his right; and that he did not seem wholly pleased by the amused look which was on Miss Brunel's face as she spoke, in rather a low tone, to her companion.

"You confess you are disappointed with me. That is quite natural; but tell me how I differ from what you expected me to be."

She turned her large, lustrous eyes upon him; and there was a faint smile on her face.

"Well," he said, "on the stage you are so unlike any one I ever saw that I did not expect to find you in private life—like any one else, in fact."

"Do you mean that I am like the young ladies you would expect to find in your friend's house, if you were asked to go and meet some strangers?"

"Precisely."

"You are too kind," she said, looking down. "I have always been taught, and I know, that private people and professional people are separated by the greatest differences of character and habits; and that if I went among those young ladies of whom you speak, I should feel like some dreadfully wicked person who had got into heaven by mistake and was very uncomfortable. Have you any sisters?"

"One. Well, she is not my sister, but a distant relation who has been brought up in my father's house as if she were my sister."

"Am I like her?"

"No. I mean, you are not like her in appearance; but in manner, and in what you think, and so forth, you would find her as like yourself as possible. I can not understand your strange notion that some unaccountable barrier exists between you and other people."

"That is because you have never lived a professional life," she said. "I know, myself, that there is the greatest difference between me now and when I am in one of my parts. Then I am almost unconscious of myself—I scarcely know what I'm doing; and now I should like to go on sitting like this, making fun with you or with

any body, or amusing myself in any way. Do you know, I fancy nothing would give me so much delight as battledore and shuttlecock if I might have it in my own house; but I am afraid to propose such a thing to my guardian, Mrs. Christmas, or she would think I was mad. Did you never wish you were ten years old again, that you might get some fun without being laughed at?"

"I used constantly to go bird's-nesting in Russia, when we were too lazy to go on a regular shooting-party, and never enjoyed any thing half so much. And you know cricket has been made a manly game in order to let men think themselves boys for an hour or two."

"I should like you to become acquainted with my dear old Christmas—do you see her down there?—and then you would know how a professional life alters one. It was she, not my dear mother, who taught me all the gestures, positions, and elocution which are the raw material we actresses use to deceive you. How she scolds me when I do any thing that differs from her prescriptions; and, indeed, she can not understand how one, in the hurry of a part, should abandon one's self to chance, and forget the ordinary 'business.' Now the poor old creature has to content herself with a little delicate compliment or two instead of the applause of the pit; and I am sometimes put to my wits' end to say something kind to her, being her only audience. Won't you come and help me some afternoon?"

The unconscious audacity of the proposal, so quietly and so simply expressed, staggered the young man; and he could only manage to mention something about the very great pleasure it would give him to do so.

He was very much charmed with his companion; but he was forced to confess to himself that she did, after all, differ a good deal from the gentlewomen whom he was in the habit of meeting. Nor was it wonderful that she should: the daughter of an actress, brought up from her childhood among stage-traditions, driven at an early period, by her mother's death, to earn her own living, and having encountered for several years all the vicissitudes and experience of a half-vagrant life, it would have been a miracle had she not caught up some angular peculiarities from this rough-and-ready education. Anerley was amazed to find that easy audacity and frankness of speech, her waywardness and occasional eccentricity of behavior, conjoined with an almost ridiculous simplicity. The very attitude her Bohemianism led her to adopt toward the respectable in life, was in itself the result of a profound child-like ignorance; and, as he afterward discovered, was chiefly the result of the tuition of a tender and anxious mother, who was afraid of her daughter ever straying from the folds of a profession which is so generous and kindly to the destitute and unprotected. All this, and much more, he was afterward to learn of the young girl who had so interested him. In the mean time she seemed to him to be a

spoilt child, who had something of the sensitiveness and sagacity of a woman.

"Look how he blushes," said the charming *soubrette* to her companion.

"Who?"

"The gentleman beside Miss Brunel."

"Are you jealous, that you watch these two so closely?"

"I'm not; but I do consider him handsome—handsomer than any man I know. He is not smooth, and fat, and polished like most gentlemen who do nothing. He looks like an engine-driver cleaned—and then his great brown mustache and his thick hair—no, I'll tell you what he's like; he is precisely the Ancient Briton you see in bronzes, with the thin face and the matted hair—"

"And the scanty dress. I suppose the Ancient Britons, like Scotchmen nowadays, wore an indelicate costume in order to save cloth."

"I do consider him handsome; but *her*! And as for her being a great actress, and a genius, and all that, I don't consider her to be a bit better than any of us."

"If that is the case, I can quite understand and approve your depreciation of her."

"I will box your ears."

"Don't. They might tell tales; and you know I'm married."

"Tant pis pour toi."

The Ancient Briton had meanwhile recovered his equanimity; and both he and Miss Brunel had joined in an argument Mr. Melton was setting forth about the deliciousness of being without restraint. The grave manager, under the influence of a little champagne, invariably rose into the realm of abstract propositions; and, indeed, his three companions, all of them in a merry mood, helped him out with a dozen suggestions and confirmations.

"And worst of all," said Miss Brunel, "I dislike being bound down by time. Why must I go home just now, merely because it is late? I should like at this very moment to go straight out into the country, without any object, and without any prospect of return."

"And why not do so?" cried Count Schönstein. "My brougham can be brought round in a few minutes; let us four get in and drive straight away out of London—anywhere."

"A capital idea," said Melton. "What do you say, Miss Brunel?"—

"I will go with pleasure," she replied, with bright childish fun in her eyes. "But we must take Mrs. Christmas with us. And that will be five?"

"But I shall go outside and smoke," said Will Anerley.

The supper party now broke up; and the ladies went off to get their bonnets, wrappers, and cloaks. In a few minutes Count Schönstein's brougham was at the door; and Miss Brunel, having explained to Mrs. Christmas the position of affairs, introduced her to Will Anerley. She had come forward to the door of the brougham, and Anerley saw a very small, bright-eyed

woman, with remarkably white hair, who was in an extreme nervous flutter. He was about to go outside, as he had promised, when Count Schönstein made the offer, which his position demanded, to go instead.

"Yes, do," said Miss Brunel, putting her hand lightly on Will Anerley's arm.

The Count was, therefore, taken at his word; Anerley remained by the young actress's side; and Mrs. Christmas being dragged in, away rolled the brougham.

"And wherever are you going at this time of night, Miss Annie?" said the old woman, in amazement.

"For a drive into the country, mother. Look how bright it is."

And bright it was. There was no moon as yet; but there was clear starlight, and as they drove past the Green Park, the long rows of ruddy lamps hung in the far darkness like strings of golden points, the counterpart of the gleaming silver points above. And there, away in the north, glimmered the pale jewels of Cassiopeia; the white star on Andromeda's forehead stood out from the dark sea; Orion coldly burned in the south, and the red eye of Aldebaran throbbed in the strange twilight. The dark gray streets, and the orange lamps, and the tall houses, and the solitary figures of men and women hurried past and disappeared; but the great blue vault, with its twinkling eyes, accompanied the carriage-windows, rolled onward with them, and always glimmered in.

This mad frolic was probably pleasant enough for every one of the merry little party inside the vehicle; but it could scarcely be very fascinating to the victimized Count, who found himself driving through the chill night-air in company with his own coachman. Perhaps, however, he wished to earn the gratitude of Miss Brunel by this dumb obedience to her whim; for he did not seek to arrest or alter the course of the brougham as it was driven blindly out into the country. He could hear the laughter from within the carriage; for they were all in the best of moods—except, perhaps, Miss Brunel, whom the sight of the stars rather saddened.

At length they came to a toll-bar. Melton put his head out and asked the Count where they were.

"Hounslow."

"Is that the Bell Inn?"

"Yes."

"Then suppose we get out, wake the people up, and give the horses a rest, while we have a little trip on foot to Hounslow Heath?"

"Is not that where all the murders and robberies used to be committed?" Miss Brunel was heard to say.

"This is the very inn," said Will Anerley, "which the gentlemen of the road used to frequent; but, unfortunately, the Heath has been all inclosed. There is no more Heath."

"We shall find something that will do for it," said Melton, as the party left the brougham, and passed down the opposite road.

Once out of the glare of the lamp at the toll-bar, they had nothing to guide them but the cold, clear starlight. Black lay the hedges on either side; black stood the tall trees against the sky; blacker still the deep ditch which ran along the side of the path, or disappeared under the gravelled pathway leading up to some roadside cottage. How singularly the light laughter of the little party smote upon the deep, intense silence of the place; and what a strange contrast there was between their gay abandonment and the sombre gloom around them. There was something weird and striking running through the absurdity of this incomprehensible excursion.

"There," said Melton, going up to a gate, and peering over into a vague, dark meadow, "is a bit of the old Heath, I know. Was it here, I wonder, that Claude Duval danced his celebrated dance with the lady?"

"Let us suppose it was," said the Count. "And why should we not have a dance now on the Heath? Mr. Melton, will you give us some music?"

"With pleasure," said the manager, opening the gate, and allowing his merry companions to pass into the meadow.

They went along until they were within a short distance of a clump of trees; and then, the Count having been ingeniously compelled to take Mrs. Christmas as his partner, Miss Brunel being Anerley's *vis-à-vis*, the manager proceeded to sing a set of quadrilles in rather an unmelodious manner, varying *la, la, la*, with *tow, row, row*. The great, pompous Count puffed, and blew, and guffawed; the little Mrs. Christmas danced with a prim and grave precision: while all did their best to help out the figures, and stumbled, and set each other right again, and laughed right heartily over the mad performance.

Then there was a sudden shriek, clear and sharp, that rang through the darkness; the dancing suddenly ceased; and Anerley sprang forward just in time to prevent Miss Brunel from sinking to the ground, her face pale as death.

"Did you not see it?" she gasped, still trembling. "Something white flashed past through the trees there—in a moment—and it seemed to have no shape."

"By Jove, I saw it too," said Melton, who had abruptly ceased his singing; "and for the life of me I can't imagine what it was."

"A white cow," suggested Anerley.

"I tell you it flew past like a streak of lightning," said Melton.

"More likely a white doe belonging to the park over there," said the Count, who was inwardly the most terrified person present.

"Let us get away from here," said Miss Brunel, who had recovered her self-composure, but was very grave. "Whatever it was, the grass is too wet for us to remain."

So they left the meadow, and walked, rather silently, back to the toll-bar; got into the

brougham, and were driven to their respective homes.

CHAPTER V.

ST. MARY-KIRBY.

CHAMPAGNE has many good qualities, but none more marked than the mild and temporary nature of the stimulus it affords. The bright and cheerful excitement it produces—so long as it is neither Russian champagne, nor one of those highly ingenious products which chemistry and the wit of man have devised—does not last so long as to interfere with any serious occupation, even should that be merely sleep; while it involves none of the gloomy reaction which too often haunts the sparkle of other wines with a warning shadow. When Will Anerley got up on the morning following the wild escapade on Hounslow Heath, it was not indulgence in wine which smote him with a half-conscious remorse. He had neither a throbbing headache nor a feverish pulse. But as he looked out of his bedroom window and saw the pale sun glimmering down on the empty streets, the strange calm of a Sunday morning—touching even in the cramped thoroughfares of London—fell upon him, and he thought of the hectic gayety of the previous night, and knew that all the evening one tender girlish heart had been wearying for his coming, away down in a quiet Kentish vale.

His absence was the more inexcusable in that it was uncertain how soon he might have to leave England. He was a civil engineer; and, from the time he had left the apprentice stool, his life had been a series of foreign excursions. He had been two years in Turkey, another year in Canada, six months in Russia, and so on; and at this moment he had been but a short time home from Wallachia, whence he had returned with his face browner, his frame tougher than ever. There was little of the young Englishman about him. There was a Celtic intensity in him which had long ago robbed him of the loose fat, the lazy gait, the apathetic indifference which generally fall to the lot of lads born and brought up as he had been; and now—with his big brown mustache, thick hair, and hazel eyes, and with that subdued determination in his look, which had made the little *soubrette* call him an Ancient Briton—he was a man whom some would call handsome, but whom most people would admire chiefly on account of the intelligence, firmness of character, and determination written upon his face.

He dressed and breakfasted hastily, got a cab, and was just in time to catch the train. After nearly an hour's drive down through Kent—pleasant enough on that bright spring morning—he reached Horton, the station nearest to St. Mary-Kirby.

Horton stands on the top of a hill sloping down into the valley in which lies St. Mary-Kirby; and if you climb, as Will Anerley did, to the top of a coal-heap which generally stands beside the

empty trucks of the station, you will see the long wooded hollow from end to end, with its villages, churches, and breadths of field and meadow. It was not to look again, however, on that pretty bit of scenery which he knew so well that he scrambled to the top of the coals, and stood there, with his hand shading his eyes from the sunlight. It was Dove Anerley he wished to see come along the valley, on her way to church; and he waited there to discover what route she would take, that so he might intercept her.

Yet there seemed to be no living thing in the quiet valley. Sleepily lay the narrow river in its winding channel, marked by twin rows of pollard willows, now green with their first leaves; sleepily lay the thin blue smoke above the far white cottages and the gray churches; sleepily lay the warm sunlight over the ruddy plowed fields, the green meadows, the dark fir-wood along the top of the hill; and sleepily it struck on the great gleaming chalk-pit on the side of the incline; while a sleepy blue haze hung around the dim horizon, half hiding the white specks of houses on the distant uplands. It was a beautiful picture in the tender light of the young spring; but there was no Dove Anerley there.

He looked at his watch.

"Half past ten," he thought, "and, as our church is under repair, she is sure to walk to Woodhill Church. But if I go down into the valley, I shall be sure to miss her."

As he spoke, there was visible a tiny speck of gray and brown crossing a broad meadow near the river; and almost at the same moment the subdued and distant music of the church bells floated up on the air. Will Anerley leaped from the coal-heap to the ground; and then straight down the hill he went, making free use of the fields on his way.

He suddenly found that the still valley was full of life, and sound, and gladness; that the morning was a miracle of mornings; that the breath of the sweet spring air seemed laden with the secret odors of innumerable flowers. And, indeed, as he walked on, there was plenty to delight him, even had Dove Anerley not been there. For the lamb-like March had bequeathed to his fickle sister a legacy of golden weather, and she now carried it in her open hand, sharing it with all of us. The orchards were white with bloom, here and there a rose-red apple-tree among the snowy bunches of the pears; the meadows were thick with daisies and cowslips, the gray sheep throwing sharp black shadows on the glowing green; the tall elms, sprinkled over with young leaves, rose from rough and ragged earth-banks that were covered with withered brier, and glistening celandine, dull colts-foot, and ruddy dead-nettle; the stately chestnuts had burst their resinous buds, and were already showing brown spikes of closed flowers; along the hedges, where the blackbird was nursing her young, and the thrush sitting on her second nestful of blue eggs, the blossoms of the blackthorn sparkled here and there like white

stars among the rich, thick green of the elm; and through all these colors and lights and shadows ran, and hummed, and sung the coarse cawing of rooks, the murmur of bees, the splashing of the river down at the mill, and the silvery music of a lark which hung as if suspended by a thread from the cold, clear blue above.

St. Mary-Kirby was just visible and no more. You could see the quaint old mill down, by the river-side, and near it an ancient farm-house, with black cattle and horses in the yard, and white pigeons flying about the rusty-red tiles of the farm buildings. Farther up, the old gray church, built of "Kentish rag," shone brightly in the sunshine; and then, among the trees, you caught a glimpse of the cottages, of Mr. Anerley's house, fronting the village green, and of the old inn with its swaying sign. There is not in Kent a more thoroughly English village than St. Mary-Kirby; and one, at least, of its inhabitants used to pray fervently every Sunday morning that no railway should ever come near its precincts.

When Will Anerley reached the bottom of the valley, he found a number of St. Mary-Kirby people walking, in isolated groups, toward Woodhill church; but one only of these people had chosen a somewhat circuitous route through the meadows lying on the south side of the river. Why she had chosen this route was probably known only to herself; but, at any rate, Will paused by the side of a stile to which the path through the meadows led. He had recognized from a considerable distance the slate-gray silk dress and brown velvet jacket which she wore; and now, as he watched her coming along, he saw that she, too, had recognized him, and that there was a pleased look in her eyes.

"Why did you come this way?" he asked, as she drew near.

"Because I thought I should meet you," she replied, with a frank smile.

He helped her up and down the rude wooden steps, and as she alighted upon the other side she suffered him to touch her cheek with his lips.

"Good-morning, Dove."

"Good-morning, Will. I made up my mind to scold you dreadfully; and all the way over from St. Mary I have been thinking what I should say to you; and now I haven't it in my heart to say a single word."

"Heaght" for "heart," she said, and "woghd" for "word;" and there was a quaint softness in this purring mannerism which made her utterances all the more tender, and seemed to harmonize with the child-like prettiness of the large violet eyes set in the delicate face, which was surrounded by crisp and wavy light-brown hair.

"That's a good girl," he said; and then she put her hand on his arm, and they walked away between the green hedges, toward Woodhill church.

It was at a concert in St. James's Hall that I first saw Dove Anerley; and while the people sang "Athalie," I sat and wondered what was the story written on that beautiful, almost sad

face. It was one of those rare faces which tantalize you in the very act of admiring them. There was nothing in it of that mature, vigorous, definite beauty of form and complexion which a man may calmly observe and criticise in the face of a woman; but a tender uncertainty, a half-suggested and shrinking loveliness which made one vaguely conscious that this frail and beautiful smile of nature might suddenly vanish from the fine features. It was not that the girl seemed unwell, or even in any degree fragile: but simply that one, in looking at her face, could not help regretting that her loveliness was not less delicate and more pronounced, that there was not more life and less sensitiveness in her large violet eyes. How beautiful she looked that evening! The passionate music seemed to have called up a flush upon her bright complexion, and lent some strange wistfulness to her big eyes; and then, when she turned to her companions and smiled, her pretty mouth and nut-white teeth might have driven a painter mad. Indeed, I know of at least one artist then present who forgot all about Mendelssohn in trying so to fix her expression on his memory that he might afterward reproduce it on canvas—her expression, her face, and the loose golden-brown hair bound down by a band of dark-blue velvet. It was two years afterward that accident threw me in the way of the Anerleys. I had never forgotten the meaning apparently written on that sensitive face; but Dove's story, as I then heard it, differed entirely from what I had imagined.

"Why have you come alone this morning?" said Will Anerley to his companion, as they walked.

"You know papa never goes to church," said the young girl. "And mamma has never gone to hear Mr. Oldham since he spoke to her about the Athanasian Creed. I suppose you did not hear about that since you came home?"

"No," said Will; though he had an idea why his mother—whom Dove had also been taught to call "mamma"—feared the Athanasian Creed.

"You know," continued the girl, very seriously, "how anxious mamma is because papa won't go to church, and because of his studies and the strange things he says at times; and sometimes she gets very sad about it. It is the only thing she is ever sad about; and when I tell her that there can't be much wrong in what so good a man believes, she only gets the sadder, and sometimes cries a little bit. Well, this Sunday morning she and I were talking about it all the way to church, and she was very much disturbed. I don't think she had ever paid any attention to the Athanasian Creed before; but on that morning Mr. Oldham read it, and I saw her look strangely at him and at the book. Then all at once her face got quite white, she shut the book, and without a word to me walked out of the church and went straight home."

"And I suppose my father laughed a little, and tried to make her believe that he had already constructed some theoretical fire-escape from the dangers with which he was threatened."

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"Mr. Oldham came over next day to call upon mamma, and he was talking very seriously to her, and making her very miserable—indeed, she was crying nearly all the time—when papa came into the room."

"Oh—was it by the door that Mr. Oldham left?"

"What do you mean? Papa stood there, with that curious smile he has on his face when he puzzles and perplexes people, you know; and in a few minutes Mr. Oldham was in a terrible rage. I remember distinctly one thing papa said. 'Mr. Oldham,' he said, with a sort of twinkle in his eye, 'I am not surprised that you have the Athanasian Creed in your service; for clergymen, like other men, must be allowed the use of bad language occasionally. But you should indulge yourself privately, and not frighten women when they go to pray in your church.'"

"How very wicked of him! But then, Dove, Mr. Oldham belongs to the next parish; and he had no business to go poaching on Mr. Bexley's manor."

"And so very anxious she is about you also, Will. She is sometimes very sad about papa; but she can't help seeing what a good man he is. She says to me that you are young, and that if you grow up to believe what he believes, you may not be quite the same—you know, dear, that is only a feeling she has."

"Who wouldn't be orthodox to please such a mother?" said Will.

"And I too," said the girl, with a touch of color in her cheek, and in rather a lower voice, "I should be grieved to think that—that you did not care about going to church, and that you did not believe as we do."

"What should have made you think about all these things?" asked Anerley, with some astonishment.

"Well, when you wrote to us from Jassy, saying you were coming home, mamma came to papa and begged him to look up all those dangerous books he is so fond of. 'My dear,' he said to her, 'Will knows more about such matters than I know; for he has breathed the new atmosphere of these new times, whereas I have nothing to help me but reading.' Is it true, Will?"

"Is what true? I tell you, darling, I will be whatever you wish me to be; so don't distress your mind about it."

It was their arrival at the church-door which stopped this conversation. They entered, and seated themselves in a tall, damp pew, while a small organ was sending its smooth and solemn notes through the hushed little building.

They were not "engaged," these two; but themselves and every body connected with them looked forward to their marriage as a matter of course. Dove Anerley was the daughter of a distant relative of Mrs. Anerley's, who had gladly escaped from a variety of misfortunes by the easy gateway of death; and Mr. Anerley had adopted the child, brought her up, and grown passionately fond of her. He was a man of very

peculiar notions, which had earned for him among the vulgar the charitable title of atheist and materialist; and so this dangerous and wicked person sat down one day before his son, when the young man had come home from college, and said to him:

"Attend to what I am going to say, Will. You have a good prospect before you: you have a sound constitution, a tolerable education, and plenty of natural ability. I am not going to spoil your chances in life by letting you fancy that you will have any money at my death—do you understand? I will start you in any profession you choose; thereafter you must fight your own battle, as befits a man; and whatever I leave will go to your mother and to Dove. If you were a fool, I should make some provision for you; as it is, I won't."

"Why, you don't suppose, father, I would rob either Dove or my mother of any thing you could give them?"

That was all that passed between the two men on the subject; and in time it came to be regarded as a matter of course that Dove Anerley was to inherit whatever wealth her foster-father should leave behind him, irrespective of the provision for his widow.

Had Will Anerley staid at home, and been accustomed to regard Dove as his sister, he would never have thought of marrying her. But even in his boyhood he had been of a singularly active and inquiring character; always anxious to study new subjects, new scenes, new faces; never satisfied with any achievement as an ultimate result; and so, his apprenticeship completed, instead of hiring himself out as an assistant to the engineer of some railway or other company, and spending a dull life in a dingy office, he threw himself boldly upon the world, and went up and down, acquiring such knowledge as no man can gain by the study of books. Nor was it only in professional directions that his inquiries extended. He had caught what is called "the spirit" of these times; was full of vague idealisms, particularly of a philanthropic kind; and was moved by a restless desire to trace back to first principles the commonest conditions of modern existence. That is a phase through which most young men who read books pass. Now and again only do we find a man of sufficient strength of character to preserve those gentle tendencies against the rough wear and tear of travel and its consequent experience. Great, therefore, was his delight to have a profession which allowed him to move freely about; and wherever he went the tender remembrance of Dove Anerley went with him.

As for her she had never taken any pains to conceal from any body her fondness for him—a fondness which had grown to be a part of her life. He was mixed up in all the finest aspirations, he was the creator of all the noblest idealisms of her too-delicately sensitive organization. In that supreme religious exaltation which is produced by fine music, by earnest prayer, or by a beautiful sunset, his was the human face to-

ward which, unconsciously to herself, she looked for the divine sympathy and compassion which in such moments man begs from the Deity. Even now, as they stood in the old oaken pew, and as she sang sweetly and clearly that tenderest of hymns—

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!"

—was she guilty of any great crime in involuntarily making him the object of that impassioned cry? Her love was her religion, her religion her love; she knew not how to distinguish between them, and like the old Romans had but one word to describe this holiest feeling of her nature.

"Now, Will," she said cheerfully, as the people streamed out of the close little building into the sweet-smelling air, "let us have a nice long walk through Woodhill Wood on our way home; it is covered with flowers just now; and then you will tell me why you did not come down last night. Every body expected you, and dinner was as dull as it could be without you. The Hepburns were over, you know, and Mr. Drysdale, and they came half an hour too soon and sat in the drawing-room, and talked of nothing but the number of breeding partridges, and the condition of the trout, and how they hoped the orchards wouldn't suffer by this early hot weather. Only big John Hepburn—who does nothing in the world but shoot and go to hounds, you know—made papa laugh very much by stretching his long legs, yawning, and saying disconsolately, 'Ah! yes, Mr. Anerley, we're getting into the dreary summer months.' He couldn't understand why papa laughed, and said he had made no joke he was aware of."

By this time they had walked through the tall, green grass of the church-yard, had clambered up the hill a bit, and left the warm sunshine for the cool shade of the wood. Only here and there did the sunlight glimmer down through the dense forest of young oak and birch; but there was no need of sunlight to make that tangled carpeting of moss and grass and wild flowers any the brighter. All around them, and as far as they could see down the glades between the trees, the earth was thick with anemones and great clusters of primroses, here and there a few wild hyacinths among patches of tenderly-veined wood-sorrel, and everywhere the blush-colored cuckoo-flower with its coronet of pale pink buds. Hushed and still the place was except when a jay went screaming from one tall tree to another, or some cawing rook flew past through the width of fleecy blue and white overhead.

"I staid in town, then, Dove, to go to a little supper, and there I met Miss Brunel."

"The actress whom every body is talking about?"

"Yes."

"And you met her privately?"

"Yes; why should that astonish you?"

"Do tell me what she is like—what she said to you—did she speak to you?"

"She is a very handsome girl, with splendid hair and eyes, and the most charming manner. What amused me chiefly was the half-maternal way in which she talked to me who might have been her father—and the airs of profound experience which she quite unconsciously gave herself. Then all the time she was ready to be amused by the tiniest things; indeed, it was quite a pleasure to sit near her and watch the comfortable, self-satisfied, almost childish way in which she delighted herself with every thing."

Will spoke quite warmly; his companion was silent for some time afterward.

"Why are you so quiet this morning, Dové?" he asked.

"Am I more than usually quiet?" she said.

"Indeed," he continued, without taking further notice of the matter, "I was vexed with myself for not coming down last evening. The fact is, I may not have many Saturday afternoons down at the old place before I leave again. I am thinking of going to Honduras—"

"To Honduras!" she repeated, rather faintly; "why should you go to Honduras?"

"They want to sink some Artesian wells about—"

"Is there no one in Honduras can sink Artesian wells?" she asked, with a scarcely concealed pout of vexation. "Your father says you have thrown away plenty of your life in going abroad, and that now you should settle here and get up a good connection in your own country."

"Although Miss Brunel made me feel old by her efforts to play the mother to me, Dove, I am young enough to feel a touch of wandering blood stir in me yet."

"Send Miss Brunel to make the Artesian wells!" said Dove, with a quick flush on her face, and then she broke out laughing, partly because she was amused at herself, and partly because she was out of humor with him.

Indeed nothing delighted him so much as to see a little harmless break in the even gentleness of the young girl's manner. It was like the rustling of a piece of tissue-paper, or the crumpling of a rose-leaf; the little petulances of which she was sometimes guilty were but a source of amusement to both of them.

CHAPTER VI.

CHESTNUT BANK.

At last they reached the brow of the hill, and beneath them lay St. Mary-Kirby, the sunlight falling lightly on the gray church, the white wooden cottages, the broad green common, and on two tall-necked swans floating on the glass-like mill-head.

Mr. Anerley's house—known in the neighborhood as Chestnut Bank—was separated from the common by a large circular pond which was fed

by a spring, and that again was divided from the house by a tall hedge, a row of short limes with black stems and young green leaves, and a pretty large lawn. Behind the house was a long garden now almost smothered in blossom, and along the carriage-drive stood rows of lilacs and acacias, with here and there an almond-tree, which yet bore a sprinkling of deep pink flowers. It was an old-fashioned house of red brick, the original builder's intention having clearly been to sacrifice to inside comfort outside appearance. When Mr. Anerley, therefore, had one side of it partly rebuilt, he had no scruple in adorning the drawing-room with French windows, which opened out upon the lawn, while the dining-room at the other side of the building had two large bay windows of the usual height from the ground. The house, nevertheless, was very snug and comfortable; and if you looked across the common and the pond, and saw it nestled among the thick foliage of lime and lilac and birch, you would say it was a very charming little country residence.

When Dove and her companion got down to this sheltered little place, they found it as usual alive with children. The gathering together from all his friends and relations of whatever small boys and girls they could spare, was a hobby of Mr. Anerley's. He liked to keep a perpetual children's party going at Chestnut Bank; and there was not a governess in one of his friend's houses who did not owe to him many a grateful holiday. Then this monstrous ogre of a materialist, who already smelt of brimstone in the nostrils of the people around, was as careful about the proprieties and go-to-bed prayers of the little ones as he was convinced that amusement ought to be their chief education. Indeed he once caught the Buttons of the small establishment amusing himself and a companion by teaching a little boy to repeat some highly improper phrases, and before the youthful joker knew where he was, he felt the lithe curl of a horsewhip round his legs—a sensation he remembered for many a day after while gayly polishing his spoons and washing out his decanters.

At this moment a little girl was seated at the piano laboriously playing a hymn-tune possessed of no very recondite chords; while on the lawn in front Mr. Anerley lay at full length, a book between his face and the sunshine. Mrs. Anerley sat on a low chair beside him, also reading, a large deerhound at her feet; while two or three more children were scampering over the lawn, occasionally "coming a cropper" over a croquet-hoop. She was a pretty little woman, with dark-brown hair and eyes—nervous, sensitive, and full of the tenderest idealisms—together a noble, affectionate, and lovable little woman. Her husband was a rather tall and spare man, with short rough gray hair and whiskers, an aquiline nose, and gentle gray eyes. He was a keen sportsman, and a languid student: a man who liked to cover his weaknesses of sentiment with a veil of kindly humor; and seemed to live very easily and comfortably, consider-

ing that he was accused of harboring materialism—that terrible quicklime, which according to some profound calculators is about to shrivel up the heavens and the earth, and all the gentle humanities which have been growing up through so many thousand years.

"Hillo, Will," said Mr. Anerley, as the young man approached and kissed his mother, "why didn't you come down last night?"

"Old Hubbard got me to stay in town with him that we might go to a supper."

"He told me he would likely see you; and asked us all to walk over to the Place in the evening. Poor man, he has never been himself since the Lord Chamberlain refused to let him attend a levée as the Count von Schönstein. Will, when any body offers you, 30,000*l.* a year, don't take it."

"I won't, father."

"Hubbard use to be as jolly, happy, and stupid a man as you could wish to meet; and since he got that money left him, he has been the most miserable of mortals. I asked him yesterday why he did not go among the city people, become a councillor, or alderman, or mayor, or get a baronetcy by buying a railway, or do something of the kind; and he crushed me with his contemptuous silence. He must have spent a lot of money in buying his countship; and yet he can't get one of the old families to look at him. If some indigent lady does not marry him, or if the Prince of Wales does not pick him up as a butt, he will die of spleen."

"And he is a good sort of fellow too," said Will. "It is a shame to invent stories about his frantic efforts to get among the aristocracy, as they're doing in town just now. I think it's one's duty to cheer him up a bit. Fancy him living all by himself in that great house—a man who can no more read than he can shoot, or fish, or ride. By the way, he tumbled off his horse in the Park on Friday morning, and nearly knocked over a little girl of Lady Charlton's, who was out for the first time. And I had half promised to introduce him to Lady Charlton; I suppose he'll decline now, after making an exhibition of himself."

"He won't, you'll see. My poor Hubbard would kiss the ground on which Lady Charlton treads, although I suppose he hasn't seen her yet."

"I think you are two spiteful wretches," said Dove, "lying there, on such a beautiful day, and laughing at one of your own friends. I think the Count a very nice gentleman, and—"

"And he brought you down a coronet of blue pearls the other day," said Mrs. Anerley, with a smile.

"Why, I've never seen that wonderful head-gear you were talking about, Dove," said Will. "Do go, and put it on now."

Dove was nowise loth; she knew as well as any body how pretty she looked in her new article of attire. In a few minutes she returned, and stood at the open glass door, the creepers

on the front of the house framing her in as if she were a picture. This head-dress—which I can not describe scientifically—the Count had purchased abroad; and, had he gone over Europe, he could not have found any thing to suit Dove's face and hair so well. There was first a simple tiara of blue pearls fixed on a gleaming blue band; then there were one or two loose strings of the pearls taken back to bind down a soft, thick swathe of white muslin which came down under the chin and encompassed the pretty head. The blue strings among the light-brown hair, the thick, soft, snowy circle round the slightly flushed face, the pleased, self-conscious eyes, and the half-smiling mouth—altogether they formed such a bright, soft, charming little picture that Mr. Anerley cried out:

"Come here at once, Dove, and kiss me, or I shall believe you're a fairy!"

And when he had his arm round her neck, he said:

"I expected every moment to see you fly right away up into the air, and then we should have seen no more of you than if you were a little white pigeon quite lost up in the blue!"

"But I should come down again, papa, when I wanted something to eat."

"Or your glass of port-wine after dinner, eh?"

They had dinner early at Chestnut Bank on Sundays, to let the servants get to afternoon church. And on Sundays, also, all the children dined down-stairs; so that they had quite a fine party to-day, when they assembled round the table. Dove had seen that all the little boys' and girls' costume was correct; had got fresh flowers for the table; and wore herself a pretty white dress with blue ribbons, adding considerably to the brightness and liveliness of the family gathering.

"Had you a good sermon to-day, Dove?" asked Mr. Anerley.

"Yes, papa; but I don't like Mr. Oldham."

She had never forgiven the good man for his too great anxiety about the Athanasian Creed.

"By the way, mamma," continued Mr. Anerley, "don't let me forget to tell you what I was reading in the papers this morning—although it will shock you, I know. They're going to secularize the Church."

Mrs. Anerley looked up—vaguely conscious that something dreadful was going to happen.

"The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are to be abolished; the churches are to be turned into school-rooms; and the clergymen may, if they like, remain and be schoolmasters. If they don't, they must walk out."

"Quite true, mother," continued Will, taking up the wondrous tale; "and the Government means to cut up all the ecclesiastical property, the glebe-lands, and what not, into small farms for the use of the poor people."

"The Prime Minister himself says it is useless trying to save the soul of a man until you give him a soul; and says that no man has a soul who is not properly fed and educated."

"He says no man can have a soul," repeated Will, "who has less than twenty shillings a week; and until that minimum is reached, the clergymen must turn farm-bailiffs or teachers. After then, the people may think about getting up churches once more. All the bishops are to be provided with a home in the Dramatic College at Maybury; the archbishops, in consideration of their inexperience of the world—"

"They're only laughing at you, mamma," said Dove.

"And a pretty example to set the children," said Mrs. Anerley. "Whoever laughs at mamma is sent up stairs to bed at once."

"Dove," said Will, suddenly, "do you know where you are going to-morrow?"

"No."

"Up to town. We're all going—except those young people who must remain in expectation of what we shall bring them when we return. You shall see, Dove—what shall you not see? I have always promised to give you a good dose of town; and now you shall have it. You shall sit up in a wire cage in the House of Commons, and look over the heads of the reporters on the drowsy gentlemen beneath. You shall see Mr. Gladstone, lying back, with his head in the air; you shall see Mr. Disraeli, apparently going to cry; and Lord Stanley, with his hat on the back of his head, and his hands in his pockets, looking as if he had just lost a bet."

"I shouldn't care a bit about one of them," said Dove.

"Then you shall go to another wire cage at Evans's; and you shall see a row of pale little boys in black, with their hands behind them, singing to rows of decorous gentlemen; or you may light upon the audience in its idiotic stage, and find them applauding Philistine politics over their raw chops. Then—and listen, mamma! the programme begins with a box, to-morrow evening, at the — theatre, where Miss Annie Brunel is playing her 'Juliet.'"

"The new actress, Will?" asked his father.

"Yes."

"Ah, *now* you promise us something worth seeing," said Dove, with glad eyes. "And oh, mamma, Will knows Miss Brunel, and has spoken to her, and says that she is—"

"Lovely," she was about to say; but she added "pretty," moderating her enthusiasm.

"Yes, I think she is rather pghetty," said Will; at which all the children laughed. "But you'll judge for yourself to-morrow night."

After dinner, and when the children had received a tiny sip of port wine along with their fruit, Mr. Anerley proposed to Will that they should smoke outside; and so a small table, some decanters and glasses, and a few chairs were carried out and placed under a great cedar-tree, which was now beginning to get a soft green velvet over its dark shelves of branches.

"Dove," whispered Mr. Anerley, "go and ask mamma if I mayn't have my song to-day?"

"But, papa, it's Sunday."

"Tell mamma to take all the children into

the meadow, with some bread for the pony. They won't hear it, then."

This was accordingly done; and then Dove, opening the French window of the drawing-room, so that the music might pass out to the gentlemen underneath the cedar, sang, very prettily indeed, Mr. Anerley's particular song—

"Where the bee sucks." Her voice was not a powerful one, but it was very tender and expressive; and there was a quaint softness in that purring habit of hers which made her sing, "Meghily, meghily shall I sleep now."

And when she went outside to Mr. Anerley, and knelt down beside him, to ask him if he was satisfied, he put his arm round her waist and said, with a smile,

"Meghily, meghily shall I sleep now, my darling. I should have been miserable all the afternoon if I had not heard my own song. I believe I wrote it, Dove."

"You mustn't sleep now, papa," she said, blushing a little over her bad pronunciation, "for you said we were going to walk over to the Place this afternoon."

"So I did; and we shall start presently."

CHAPTER VII.

BALNACLUITH PLACE.

"It often surprises me," said Mr. Anerley, as the little party made its way across the common of St. Mary-Kirby, in the warm evening glow, "that Hubbard cares to keep up acquaintance with us. We always dislike people who have known us in ill-fortune, or penury, or great depression. I even hate the flavor of cigars that I have smoked in time of sickness; I must have others when I get well again. Now, Hubbard, with his deer-park, and harriers, and thirty thousand a year, ought to be disgusted with people who knew him as a tea-broker."

"Don't be so ill-natured about Mr. Hubbard, dear," said his wife, with a smile. "I'm sure he is a big, soft, stupid, well-meaning sort of man."

Mr. Anerley was not quite so certain about the softness and good intentions of the Count, but he charitably forbore to speak. Dove and Will, who had stood for a few seconds on the bridge, to watch the two swans come sailing toward them in expectation of crumbs—cleaving the burnished gold of the mill-head into long purple lines—now came up; and they walked away from the still little village, along the green lanes, until they drew near "the Place."

It was a great, sombre, fine old building, which had figured in history under another name—a large building of gloomy red brick, with innumerable mullioned windows, and peaks, and stone griffins—a building that had here and there grown gray and orange with the lichens and rain and wind of many years. It stood upon a high terrace on the side of a hill sloping down to the river, which ran along the valley

to St. Mary-Kirby; and at this point the stream—a line of flashing gold winding through the soft green—divided the terrace and lawn of the house from the great park opposite, with its magnificent elms and its small, close-lying herd of deer. Round about the Place, too, were some fine trees, on a particular cluster of which a colony of rooks had established themselves at some bygone time. Altogether a noble and handsome old building was this Balnacluth Place, for which the Graf von Schönstein had—not without a purpose—expended a large sum of money, on his accession to fortune. Alas! the influence of the Place had fled the moment he bought it. The brilliant gentlemen and lovely ladies whom the Count had pictured to himself dining in the great hall, or walking in the broad park, never appeared. The grand old house had lost its mesmerism; and no longer drew down from London those brilliant parties of wits, and beaux, and belles who once—as the Count had informed himself—held their merry revels there. He had sparkling wines at his command; lights he could have in abundance; when he chose, the dining-hall was brilliant with plate, and flowers, and fruit—but the ladies and gentlemen whom he had mentally invited, staid away. And he was not the man to go out into the highways and byways, and gather in beggars to his feast. He had aimed at a particular kind of guests: they had not come; but there was yet hope of their coming.

When the Anerleys drew near, they perceived the figure of a man walking solitarily up and down the stone terrace in front of the house. His only companions were the couchant lions at each end of the terrace, which had kept guard there, over the few steps, for nearly a couple of centuries.

"It is Hubbard himself," said Mr. Anerley.

"He looks like the ghost of some dead owner of the house, come back to take his accustomed stroll," said Will.

"At all events, he is smoking," said Dove.

When the Count perceived his visitors, he threw away his cigar, and came down to meet them, saluting them with florid and formal courtesy.

"No need to ask how *you* are, Miss Anerley—charming as ever. Persuaded our friend Will to give up his wandering life, eh?"

This was the Count's great joke; it had never been known to fail, at least, in rendering Dove very uncomfortable.

"What a fine evening! Look how beautiful the trees are down there!" he continued, allowing his eye to roam over the prospect before him in innocent pride—looking, indeed, as if he thought that God had prepared the sunset simply to light up Count Schönstein's park.

"It is a fine park; and a beautiful evening, too," said Mr. Anerley. "It is a pity that most beautiful things make one sad."

"That is because we don't possess them," said the Count, laughing; he was of a practical turn of mind.

The Count turned to the ladies, and—as was his universal custom when he wished to be polite—he insisted on their going inside and having a glass of wine.

"Look here, Anerley," he said, when both of them declined, "you must come and try some port I got down last night—bought it at the sale of Major Renson's cellar on Thursday £10 a dozen, and cheap at the money."

"If it was sent home last night, I'd rather not," said Mr. Anerley, with a smile.

"I didn't mean that particular wine," replied the Count, unblushingly. "Or will you all stay and dine with me? Do; I dine at eight."

This was what is bluntly called a lie; the Count—except when circumstances compelled him—never forsook his old dinner-hour of five. He had, in fact, only begun his second cigar after dinner when the Anerleys arrived. But the Count probably fancied that a mere courtesy-lie wasn't much, and trusted to his visitors declining the invitation, which they did.

"I would rather go down and see the deer," said Dove. "Didn't you say you had some roe-deer among them?"

"Those I had brought from Schönstein?" said the Count, rather pompously. "They all died, as Hermann said they would. But it was an experiment, you know. I must get Hermann, if we're going into the park; the deer won't come to me."

He went into the house for a few moments, and reappeared, followed by the keeper, a splendid-looking fellow, with a brown, handsome face, great shoulders, and long legs encased in rough top-boots. This Hermann had been the head-keeper, chief forester, and what not, of Schönstein, when Mr. Hubbard bought the place, and, on the principle of the Portuguese navigators, who brought home men and women from the Guinea coast to prove that they had been there, the Count carried the big Schwarzwald over to England with him, as a specimen of what he had purchased abroad. Unlike most of his Schwarzwald brethren, Hermann knew not a word of English; Hubbard knew not a word of German; and for many a month after his expatriation, the efforts of master and man to understand each other formed a constant comedy at the Place. In one or two cases Mr. Anerley was besought to act as interpreter; and even now nothing delighted the stalwart, good-natured Black-forester so much as a long talk in his native language with any of his master's guests who were capable and complaisant enough to humor him.

"Hermann," said the Count, loudly, to let his visitors know that *now* he could support his rank by talking in the language of the country which gave it him, "das Fräulein wünscht die—die Rehe zu sehen—"

"The Rehe are all died, Herr Graf," said the sturdy keeper, who would not have his native tongue burlesqued.

"Ich meine die—die—the deer that are there," said the Count, sharply and hotly, "und

sie müssen, wissen Sie, etwas—etwas—eh—ah—etwas Speise—”

“Futter, nicht whar?” suggested Will, looking gravely at Dove.

“Yes, yes, of course; the fellow knows well enough. I mean to get the deer to come up to him.”

“They will come without nothing, Herr Graf,” said the tall forester.

They crossed the small iron bridge leading from the lawn over the river into the park. The deer were for the most part lying down underneath the shadow of three large oaks, one or two only still standing and nibbling the grass. When our party drew near, however, the whole herd rose and retreated a little, while one of the bucks came proudly to the front and stood with his small head and tall horns erect, watching the approach of the strangers.

“Will you come with me, Fräulein?” said Hermann; and Dove went forward with him, leaving the others behind.

No sooner had the keeper thus made himself distinctly visible, than two or three of the does came timidly forward, alternating a little quiet canter with a distrustful pause, and at last one of them came quite up to the keeper and looked rather wistfully at his hand with her large, soft brown eyes.

“This is her I call *Lämmchen*,” said Hermann, stroking the small neck of the hind, “she is so tame. And there is *Leopard* over there, with the spots on him. I speak to them in German; they know it all the same.”

One of the bucks now seemed also desirous to approach; looking about him in a sheepish way, however, as if it were beneath his dignity for him to follow the example of the women of his tribe.

“Komm her, du furchtsamer Kerl!” said Hermann, going forward, and taking hold of him by one of his broad, palmated horns; “he is a fine deer, is he not? Look at his horns and his bright colors. He is better than for to be in a park, like the cows. He should be in the woods.”

He took a piece of brown bread from his pocket and gave it to Dove, who held it to the small mouth of the buck, where it was speedily nibbled up. Then she stroked his neck and looked at his big, apprehensive eyes; and then they went back to the group whom they had left.

“Miss Anerley,” said the Count, “won’t you persuade those people to go inside and have some tea? I ought to be able to give you good tea, you know.”

It was when the Count wished to be very modest and complaisant indeed, that he joked about his old calling.

They went inside, and sat in a large, sombre, oaken-panelled room, with the fast fading light coldly falling through the diamond panes of the tall and narrow windows. Then lamps were brought in, and tea; and they sat talking and chatting for nearly an hour.

When they went out upon the terrace again, to go home, there was a pale moonlight lying over the lawn, hitting sharply here and there on the

stone mullions of the windows, and touching grayly and softly a thin mist which had settled down upon the park. It was a beautiful, still night; and as Dove and Will went home, they allowed Mr. and Mrs. Anerley to get on so far in front of them that at last they were only visible as dark specks on the white road.

For some time they walked on in silence; and then Will said, carelessly, “Will you go up to town with me to-morrow morning, Dove, and I’ll devote the whole day to you; or will you come up with my father in the afternoon?”

She did not answer him; and then, in a second or two, when he looked down, he was surprised to find her eyes full of tears.

“What ever is the matter, Dove?”

“Oh, Will,” she said, turning the beautiful, wet eyes up to his face—and they were very beautiful in the soft moonlight—“I have been wanting to speak to you all day; and I have been so afraid. I wanted to ask you not to—not to go to Honduras—won’t you give it up if I ask you, Will?”

“Why should that trouble you, Dove? If I do go, it will only be a short trip; and then it will be of great advantage to me in this way, that if—”

“But, Will, dear, listen to me for a moment,” she said, with a piteous entreaty in her voice. “I know why you have always to go away from England, although you have been too kind-hearted to speak of it—I know it quite well—it’s because I am to have the money that belongs to you, and you have to fight your way all by yourself, and leave your family year after year, and all because of me—and I won’t have the money, Will—I hate it—and it’s making me more miserable every day.”

“Darling, don’t distress yourself like that,” he said, soothingly, for she was now crying very bitterly. “I assure you, you mistake the whole affair. I won’t go to Honduras, if you like—I’ll do any thing you ask me. But really, Dove, I go abroad merely because, as I believe, one of my ancestors must have married a gipsy. I like to wander about, and see people, and live differently, and get generally woke up to what’s going on in the world. Bless you, my darling, if it were money I wanted, I ought to have remained at home from the beginning. My father has only done what any well-thinking man would have done in his place—and you mustn’t fret yourself about such a trifle—”

“I knew you would never acknowledge I was robbing you, Will; but I am. And all the time you were in Russia, and in Canada, whenever there was a heavy storm blowing, I used to lie awake at night and cry; because I knew it was I who had sent you away out there, and I thought you might be in a ship and in danger—all through me. And this morning, when you—when you said you were going to Honduras—I made up my mind then to go to papa to-morrow morning, and I’ll tell him I won’t have the money—I’ll go away from you altogether rather, and be a governess—”

"Now, now, Dove, don't vex me and yourself about nothing," he said to her, kindly. "I won't go to Honduras."

"You won't?"

"I won't."

She raised her head a little bit—in an entreating way—and the compact was sealed.

"I'll tell you what I shall do," he said, taking the hand that lay on his arm into his own. "I will stay at home, get myself into some regular work, take a small house somewhere near here, and then you'll come and be my wife, won't you, Dove?"

There was a slight pressure on his hand: that was her only answer. They walked on for some little time in silence; and then, catching a glimpse of her face, he stopped to dry the tears from her cheeks. While engaged in that interesting occupation, she said to him, with a little smile:

"It looks as if I had asked you, Will—doesn't it?"

"I don't think so," he said.

"It wouldn't matter, if I did—would it?" she asked, simply. "For you know how fond I am of you, Will."

They talked of that and a good many other relevant matters until they had reached St. Mary-Kirby. They paused for a moment on the bridge—to look at the dark shadows about the mill and the white sheen of the moonlight on the water; and then she whispered timidly,

"When shall we be married, Will?"

"We shall be maghied whenever you like, Dove," he said lightly and cheerfully.

CHAPTER VIII.

JULIET.

By the time the "playing-in" farce was over, the house was quite full. That morning's paper had written in such a fashion about the new triumph of Miss Brunel on Saturday night, that long before the box-office was closed there was not a registered place in the building which had not been seized upon. Will foresaw what was likely to happen, and had asked Mr. Melton to secure him a box.

When the little party drove from the Langham—Will's rooms in town scarcely offering them the accommodation they required—Dove was in high spirits. It was the first time she had gone anywhere with the young gentleman opposite her since there "engagement;" and she already felt that comfortable sense of extended possession which married people enjoy. She took her seat in the brougham, which Count Schönstein had kindly placed at their disposal, with a new and fluttering pleasure; she already imagined herself to have the importance and the claims to attention of a wife; and she accepted Will's little courtesies in this light, and made herself very happy over the altered aspect of their relations.

When her opera-cloak had been hung up, and her tiny bouquet, opera-glass, and bill placed daintily before her, the graceful little woman ensconced herself in the corner, and timidly peeped round the curtain. She was dressed in a very faint blue silk, with sharp broad lines of white about it; and over and through her rippling brown hair ran the strings of blue pearls which Count Schönstein had given her. Not even Mrs. Anerley, who saw her often enough, could forbear to look with a tender pride upon the girl; and as for Mr. Anerley, whose tall, upright figure was hid in the shadow of the box, he would fain have sat down beside his adopted daughter, with his arm round her waist, and forgot all about what they had come to see.

The orchestra finished its overture, borrowed from the delicate "Sonnambula" music, and the curtain rose. Dove was disappointed at not seeing Miss Brunel; and paid but little attention to the preliminary scenes.

Suddenly there was an extraordinary commotion throughout the house, and a burst of that fine, strong, thunderous music which artists love to hear; and then Dove saw advance a girlish-looking creature with a calm, somewhat pale, and interesting face, and beautiful black hair. She was only girlish in the slightness of her figure; there was an artistic completeness in her motions and a self-possession in her bearing which gave her something of a queenly look. She wore a magnificent white satin dress, the train of which lay in splendid masses behind her; and down over this white and gold fell a black lace veil, partly hiding the rich hair and enclosing the clear, beautiful dark face. Dove was spell-bound by that face. It somehow suggested Italy to her, and blue skies, and music, and the passionate artistic warmth of the South. Nor was the illusion destroyed by the low chest-voice with which the girl replied to the questions of her mother. And from that moment, Dove thought no more of Miss Brunel and Will's friend. She saw only Juliet, and followed her sad story with an aching heart and a trembling lip.

During the matchless balcony-scene, Will saw this intense sympathetic emotion growing upon the girl. I believe it is considered to be the proper thing for young ladies to be able to turn round and smile compassionately to each other, when the tragic sadness on the stage is making the women in the pit sob bitterly, and raising great lumps in the throats of the men. It is a pretty accomplishment, in its way; and may be indicative of other qualities which these young persons are accused of possessing. Dove's emotional tendencies had never been educated, however; and in this balcony-scene, as I say, she watched the lovers with a painful interest, which wrote its varying story every moment on her face. The theatre was still as death. The scarcely-uttered tendernesses of Juliet were heard as distinctly as if they had been breathed into one's ear; and the eyes of the audience drank in the trembling lights and shadows of her girlish passion with an unconscious delight and ad-

miration. The abandonment of her affection, the reluctant declarations, the coy shrinkings, and piteous, playful, tender apologies were so blended as to make the scene an artistic marvel: and Dove sat "laughin' maist like to greet," as the old Scotch song says. Indeed she scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry with the delight—the absolute delight which this piece of true art gave her; and when at last Juliet had forced herself to the parting—

"'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone:
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird;
Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty."

when, lingeringly and sadly, she had withdrawn from the balcony, Dove rose suddenly and, with a half-choked sob in her voice, said,

"Oh, Will, I should like so much to see her—and—and—"

"Kiss her," she had nearly said; but thinking it might be ridiculous, she stopped.

"It's against the rules, Dove," said Will, with a smile. "Besides, that isn't Miss Brunel you've been looking at; that is Juliet. Both are very nice ladies; but they are quite unlike each other."

Dove was terribly disappointed. She would like to have declared her conviction that Miss Brunel was Juliet, that she had every bit the same tenderness, and sweetness, and loveliness; but she was afraid her enthusiasm might make Mrs. Anerley laugh at her, and so she bore the rebuff patiently.

Presently, however, some one tapped at the box-door; and the next moment Will was introducing the manager, Mr. Melton, to his companions.

"My young friend here," said Will to Melton, while Dove's pretty face assumed an extra tinge of color, "has been so much struck by Miss Brunel, that she would like to go and thank her personally."

Now Mr. Melton was in a very good humor.

The house was crammed; there was almost no "paper" in it; and the prospect of a good run through the popularity of his new acquisition had warmed up his impassive nature into quite a pronounced geniality.

"Then you ought to introduce the young lady to Miss Brunel," said Mr. Melton, blithely. "If you like I'll take you round at the end of the act, when Miss Brunel will have a little 'wait.'"

"Will you go, Dove?" asked Will.

"Yes," she said timidly.

Just as the curtain fell upon the scene in Friar Lawrence's cell, at the end of the second act, Mr. Melton conducted Dove and Will down a tortuous little stone stair into a narrow passage, from which they entered into the wings. A noisy and prolonged recall was thundering throughout the house, and Miss Brunel was being led on to the stage by Romeo to receive renewed plaudits. When she returned and passed under the glare of the jets in one of the en-

trances, Will went forward to shake hands with her.

"I have to congratulate you again," he said.

"Thank you," she said simply.

There had been a pleased smile of welcome in her eyes when they met; and yet it seemed to him that there was a strange, intense expression in her look which was not natural to it. Once or twice before he had seen her in the same circumstances; and invariably this unconscious, mesmeric intensity was present in her eyes. He explained it to himself by supposing that the emotional idealism of her assumed character had not quite died out of her yet.

Then she turned and saw Dove standing with Mr. Melton. Will begged to introduce his "sister;" and the brief ceremony was sufficiently singular. For a moment the dark, lambent eyes of Miss Brunel were fixed upon the fair young girl with a sort of hesitating look—an inquiring, apprehensive look which Will never forgot; then all at once she frankly extended her hand. Dove, a little frightened, approached and shook hands with her.

"Mr. Anerley has spoken to me about you," said Annie Brunel; and Dove was conscious that the dark-haired girl before her knew her secret.

How singular it was to hear herself addressed in those low, rich tones which a few minutes ago were addressing Romeo in the moonlight! Dove almost felt herself enchanted; and could have believed at that moment that she herself belonged to the old, sad, sweet play which seems to contain every thing that was ever uttered about man's love and woman's devotion.

"I must go down to my dressing-room now," said Miss Brunel to Dove. "Will you come with me, if you are curious to see the place? I will send some one round with you to your box afterward."

Will saw that Dove would like to go, so he settled the proposal by telling her not to be in Miss Brunel's way; and then he and Melton returned to the front of the house.

Dove was now conducted by her companion down into the theatrical Hades which lies beneath the stage: She saw the figures of the carpenters gliding like the spirits of the damned through the dusky twilight; she saw the cumbersome woodwork, the machinery of the traps, and what not, rendered faintly visible by the glimmering jets; and then she was led into the bright little room which was appropriated to Miss Brunel's use.

"You may go home if you like, now, Sarah," said the latter to her dresser. "Mrs. Christmas is in the theatre, and will be here presently."

"Thank you, miss," said the tidy little woman, who immediately hurried away home to get supper ready for her husband, a gasman in the theatre.

It was the best single dressing-room in the place; but it was not a very grand apartment. There was, however, a full-length mirror at one end which had been privately presented (with

a hint as to its destination) by Count Schönstein to Mr. Melton; and the manager had thought that the least *he* could do was to newly paper the little chamber. At present it was in a state of confusion which largely excited Dove's curiosity. The implements of stage effect were displayed before her, on the floor, on the table, and on the marble slab underneath the smaller looking-glass; and all around lay or hung divers articles of costume and ornament, the peculiarly bright materials and prominent decorations of which were very new to her. But it needed only a glance at Juliet's clear, beautiful face to see that she required very little "making-up," nor was Dove less surprised to find that the lace and similar little delicacies of the young actress's costume were real and valuable.

"My mother taught me to make all these things myself," she explained to Dove. "She was very particular about them; and used to say that when one meant to spend one's life in a profession, one ought to have as much pride in wearing real lace on the stage as out of doors."

"And do you mean to spend all your life in your profession?" asked Dove, timidly.

"Yes; why not?" said the girl, with a smile.

"I—I don't know," stammered Dove, blushing dreadfully.

"Come, be frank with me," said Annie Brunel, taking the girl's hand in hers. "Don't you think it very wicked to be an actress?"

Dove was now forced to explain herself.

"I don't, indeed," she said. "But I couldn't help thinking that you are too young and—and too pretty—to waste all your life in a theatre."

"Oh, nonsense," said Miss Brunel, laughing in a motherly sort of way. "I live only in the theatre. I find my life wasted whenever I go out of it, and spend my time in amusing myself like a child. I have nothing to interest me but the theatre; nothing to live for out of it; and it is only when I get into the spirit of my part that I feel myself all throbbing over with a delicious life. You don't understand that? Why, my very fingers tingle with enjoyment; I get quite a new warmth within me; and many a time I can't help laughing or crying quite naturally when the scene suggests it. I'm sure no one in front has half the delight in a play that I have. I scarcely see the wings, and the prompter, and the scene-shifters; I forget the abominable smell of gas; and I should like to keep on the character forever—if it is one that pleases me. When I get a new and unpleasant part, I hate acting. I feel as if I were doing exactly what Mrs. Christmas taught me; and that the people must be laughing at me; and I become afraid of the critics, and hope that I sha'n't forget the cues."

Here the call-boy came running to the door; Juliet was wanted for the second scene. She hastily departed; and Dove was left alone.

"How very friendly she must be with Will, to receive me so kindly, and talk to me so frankly," thought Dove; when it was her own pretty

face that had won upon the young actress's heart.

The scene in Capulet's house is a short one, and Annie Brunel was speedily back in her room. She brought with her Mrs. Christmas; and the bright, white-haired little woman made a pert courtesy when she was introduced, and said how sorry she was to hear that the young lady had been sitting alone. The next moment she was running into a series of ludicrous stories about the mistakes inexperienced people had made in trying to find their way about the theatre by themselves; and it must be confessed that her anecdotes were sometimes so very humorous that it was as well that only ladies heard them.

"And something of the same kind," she continued, with her merry little eyes sparkling, "happened to Mr. —, the celebrated author, you know, with Nelly Featherstone, who is in this theatre at the present moment—or ought to be. You know, it was a benefit night, Miss — Hammersmith?—Yes, Miss Hammersmith; and there was a general hurry-scurry, and he had been left in the wings. He asked a super how he should get to Mr. Crimp (and it was his benefit, my dear, and he had several friends with him, all drinking in his room), and the man told him to go to the first dressing-room on the right when he went down stairs. But his right was our left, as you know, my dear; and there were in the first dressing-room on the left Nelly Featherstone and her sister, and another girl, all dressing as hard as ever they could for the burlesque. Nelly was 'Perseus,' and before she had got on her tights, she was in—in a transition state, shall we say, my dear?"

Here the merry little woman laughed until the tears ran down her withered gray cheeks. "And up to the door goes Mr. —, and opens it without thinking. Oh, Lor! what a fright he must have got! Nelly screamed at the pitch of her voice, and fell into a chair, and screamed again; and her sister Jeanie (*she* had some clothes on) ran at the poor man, and said something very offensive, and slammed the door in his face. Poor fellow, he nearly died of shame; and Nelly's scream told every body of his blunder, and Crimp and all his friends shrieked over it—but not before him, my dear, for he was much too celebrated a man to be laughed at. Only he sent her next day an explanation and an apology through the manager, and as beautiful a bouquet as ever you saw; and he got a friend of his to write a lovely notice of her in the *Diurnal* itself, when old Yellowjaw's piece was—Mercy, gracious me! There's the call-boy again—run, Miss Annie!"

"Good-bye," said Miss Brunel, hurriedly, shaking hands with Dove. "I should like you to come often and see me."

She bent over her for a moment, kissed her lightly and left.

"You know what that means?" said Mrs. Christmas to Dove. "That means that she will speak to no one this night again until her part is finished. All the theatre knows her way,

and humors her. It's when the genius is working on her—that's what I say; and I know it, for I've seen it in her mother. *There* was the sweetest woman you ever heard of—not very friendly, Miss, you know, in the way of talking of her own affairs—and it's nothing I could ever make out about her life before I knew her—but the sweetest creature! the tenderest creature! And she was such a rare good actress, too—but nothing like her daughter; she knew that, and used to sit and talk for hours—it was the only thing she would talk about—over what she expected Miss Annie to be. And once she said to me, with tears running down her face, 'I pray every night that my little girl may be kept always an actress; and that she may never look for happiness outside her own profession.' But it's a shame to keep you here, Miss, if you've never seen Miss Annie's 'Juliet;' she said I was to take you back to your box when you wished to go."

So once more Dove passed through the dismal region and worked her way upward to the light of the theatre. He friends were astonished at her long absence; but they were too much enthralled by what was going on upon the stage to speak to her. And again Dove looked down upon that queenly little person with whom she had been talking; and could not explain to herself the strange sensation she then experienced. It seemed as if her visit to the dressing-room had been a trance; and that she had really been speaking with Juliet. In the dressing-room she had seen before her only a fine-looking, intellectual, and very courteous lady; but now, upon the stage, she could not see this lady at all. She even lost the power of remembering her. Those jet-black tresses, those fine eyes, and that pale, beautiful forehead—above all, that rich, majestic voice—all these belonged to Juliet, were Juliet, and she knew that it was a Juliet in nature, if not in name, who had spoken to her, and taken her hand, and kissed her.

This is perhaps the severest test to which an artist can be put. When you know the writer of a book, you can not help underestimating the book. You are familiar with the author's personality, his habit of thought, perhaps with the material on which he works; you think of him more than of his book; and nothing but the soundest and most concentrated effort will overcome the influence of this unwittingly unjust scrutiny. When you know an actor or an actress, you involuntarily search for himself or herself in the assumed character; you look at the character from within, not from without; you destroy the illusion by a knowledge of its material elements. Nothing but the power of genius will force upon you under these circumstances the idealism which the artist is laboring to complete.

But Dove was an easy subject for the spiritual magnetism of art. Her keenly sympathetic nature vibrated to the least motion of the magician's hand; and when the passionate climax of Juliet's misery was reached, Dove had entirely

lost self-control. For a little time she tried to retain her composure, although Mrs. Anerley saw her lips suddenly tremble when Juliet begged the friar to show her some means of remaining faithful to her husband—

"And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love."

But in the final scene she quite broke down. She rose and went to the back of the box, and stood in a corner, sobbing bitterly. Mr. Anerley drew her toward him; and tried to soothe her, in his quiet, kindly way.

"My darling, why should you vex yourself? You will see 'Juliet' alive in a few minutes."

"I know it well enough," she said, trying to assume her ordinary manner, "but it's very wrong for any one to write things like that to make people cry."

"The naughty Shakspeare sha'n't do it again, that he sha'n't," said Will, compassionately. "And as for Miss Brunel, who is most in fault—but here she comes!"

Will picked out of the corner the large bouquet which lay there; and returned in time to let it drop—nearly the first of a fine collection of similar tributes which welcomed the triumph of the young actress—almost at her feet. Romeo picked it up, along with two others; she took this particular one, and sent a single bright look so clearly up to the box, that a good many heads were turned thither. When Romeo had picked up the remaining bouquets, and when she had again and again bowed her acknowledgments of the cordial applause of the theatre, the girl with the pale face and the black hair retired, and the people calmed down.

"Now, Dove," said Will, "if you wish to be cheered up a bit before going, there is as absurd a farce as ever was written to follow. Shall we stay?"

"Just as you please, Will," said Dove, looking down.

The first of her new duties, she thought, was submission and obedience; and she hoped neither Mr. nor Mrs. Anerley noticed her little conjugal effort.

If it was agreed, however, that they should go home at once; and Will went off to hunt up Count Schönstein's brongham. In a short space of time they were seated in the Langham hotel, awaiting supper.

"And not the least pleasant part of a play," said Mr. Anerley, dogmatically, as he fingered one of his wine-glasses, "is the supper after. You come out of the gas and the heat into a cool, fresh room; and—and—waiter! bring some ice, please."

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUNT'S BROTHER.

ON that same evening the Herr Graf von Schönstein dined with his brother, Mr. John Hubbard, at his residence, Rose Villa, Haver-

stock Hill. The Count, since his grand accession to fortune, was not a frequent visitor at his brother's house; but when he did go there, he was treated with much deference and apparent kindness.

There was at dinner only the Count, his brother, his brother's wife, and her sister. When the two ladies rose to go into the drawing-room, Mrs. Hubbard said to the Count, who had sprung to the door:

"Pray don't leave us two poor creatures all to ourselves: you may smoke in the drawing-room whenever you please to come in."

"Jack," said the Count, returning to the table and pulling out his cigar-case, "that wife of yours is an angel."

And so she was an angel—that is, a being without predicates. She was a mild, colorless, pretty woman, never out of temper, never enthusiastic, absolutely ignorant of every thing beyond drawing-room accomplishments, scarcely proud even of her smooth light-brown hair, her blue eyes, and rounded cheeks. She knew, of course, that there were few women of her age looked so well and so young; she did not know to attribute that rotundity and youthfulness of face to her easy temperament, her good disposition, and lack of brain. Mrs. John Hubbard was conscious of thinking seriously only upon one subject; and that was whether the Count, her brother-in-law, could be induced to marry her sister, or whether he would remain unmarried and leave his large fortune to her eldest boy Alexander, a young gentleman of eight, who now, in Highland dress, was about to sit down to the piano and delight his mother and aunt with a *staccato* rendering of "La ci darem la mano."

There were reasons why Mrs. Hubbard should be disquieted upon this point.

"Quite an angel," said the Count, oracularly. "But we mustn't go into the drawing-room just yet. I want to talk to you, Jack, about that young lady, you know."

"Miss Brunel?"

"Yes. Will you mind my taking a glass of that pale port of yours with my cigar? I know it's a shame, but—"

"Don't mention it, Fred, I wish you'd come oftener and try it."

John Hubbard straightened himself up in the wide easy-chair; and prepared to receive his brother's disclosures or questions on a matter which was deeply interesting to them both. John was very unlike his stout, pompous brother: a thin little man, with gray hair and gray eyes; troubled by a certain twitching of the eyebrows, and affected generally by a weak and extremely nervous constitution. An avaricious man who sees his younger brother become possessed of thirty thousand a year which he himself expected to get, generally exhibits other than fraternal feelings; but whatever John Hubbard may have felt, the fact remains, that so soon as his brother Frederick became the undoubted owner of this money, he, John, began to observe

toward him a severe deference and courtesy. When the Count went to dine at Rose Villa, there were no tricks played upon him in the matter of wine. The claret-cup was not composed of "sudden death," at ten shillings a dozen, with a superabundance of water, and cucumber peel instead of borage. The dry sherry was not removed with the fish, in the hope that the dulled after-dinner palate might accept some Hambro' decoction with equanimity. One wine was pretty much the same as another wine to the Count von Schönstein; but he was pleased to know that his brother thought so much of him as to be regardless of expense.

"Are you quite sure, Jack," said the younger brother, drawing his chair near, "that nobody, beyond those you mentioned to me, knows who Miss Brunel is?"

"As far as I know, Fred; as far as I know," said the other, in an injured, querulous tone. "I can't hold myself responsible, and I'm not infallible."

"In a matter of this kind," said the Count, smiling benignly, "most people seem to think that Cayley and Hubbard are infallible. They say you are the repositories of all the scandals of the aristocracy; and that you might turn England upside down by publishing what you know. But I dare say that's exaggerated. Now don't you think that some one who remembers that story of twenty-five years ago and happens to see Miss Brunel, might recognize the resemblance between her and her mother, and then begin to inquire into the affair?"

There was a strong twitching of John Hubbard's eyebrows. He was far from being a good-tempered man; and to be compelled to sit and play the hypocrite was almost too much for him. He saw clearly whither these questions tended. He knew his brother's ruling passion; he knew there was nothing he would not do to be admitted among those people who had refused to recognize his purchased title. Again and again he had inwardly cursed his folly in telling the Count the story of Annie Napier and her daughter; that breach of professional confidence was likely to lose his family thirty thousand a year. Can one conceive a more tantalizing position for a narrow-minded and avaricious man to assume than the involuntary prompting and guidance of a scheme which is likely, in the most gratuitous way, to deceive his own most dearly cherished hopes? If some one else had suggested to the Count a marriage with Miss Brunel as a possible passport to society, John Hubbard would not have been so chagrined. He would have been able to dissuade his brother from the step with such reasons as he could discover. But he had himself told the Count the real history of Annie Brunel; he was compelled to furnish him with all sorts of information; and saw, through his own instrumentality, that money slipping out of his fingers which otherwise might have been his or his son's.

"I have explained it to you before, Fred," he said, patiently. "Old Mr. Cayley, who went

out to America to see the Marquis of Knottingley's wife, lives down in Suffolk, where he is not likely to meet people who have much interest in Miss Brunel. Besides, he has a very fine sense of honor in these matters, and would not break a pledge he gave to Miss Brunel's mother, not to seek in any way to induce her daughter to leave the stage. And you know the people who knew of the marriage were very few; and most of them are dead. Mr. Palk is in his dotage, and lives in Westmoreland. Then who is likely to remember Miss Napier's appearance; or to perceive a likeness between her and Miss Brunel beyond the casual likenesses which occur constantly on the stage? I believe I could count on my ten fingers all the people who know who Miss Brunel really is. There's my wife—one; old Mr. Cayley—two; Cayley, my partner—three; you yourself—"

He stopped; for his brother was evidently not listening to him. So preoccupied was the Count, indeed, that he broke the ash off the end of his cigar upon the edge of his wine-glass, allowing the ash to fall into the port.

"I hope I haven't poisoned you with some of my wines," said John Hubbard, with a thin laugh.

"I beg your pardon!" said his brother, reaching over for another glass, "I really didn't know what I was about. The whole affair seems to me so romantic and impossible—like a play, you know, or something of that sort. I can scarcely believe it; and yet you lawyer fellows must sometimes meet with such cases."

"I have one of my people down in Southend just now, trying if he can trace any thing about a woman and her child who, we believe, lived there eighteen years ago. If we find her, a curious story will come out. But I never in the whole course of my life heard of any woman, except Miss Napier, who refused a title and a fortune, which were by right her own. I suppose the common-sense of actresses gets poisoned by the romantic sentiment in which they live and breathe."

"If you mean as regards money," said the Count, with a patronizing smile, "I can assure you that most actresses have an uncommonly small proportion of sentiment and a very tolerable share of sense. Miss Brunel's mother must have been an extraordinary woman in many respects—what you and I would consider a fool, though many people would give her folly a fine name. Now, about revealing this secret to Miss Brunel, don't you think some of the Marquis's relatives might do that?"

"They would cut their fingers off first," said John Hubbard with nervous decision. "They knew every action of her mother after she left this country—so old Mr. Cayley told me; they now watch her daughter closely, and try to discover every thing they can about her; and their intensest hope is that she may never learn what a splendid property lies at her command, so that it may revert to them or their heirs, as she will direct. And what a property it is, Fred!"

"Ah! I suppose so," said the Count, with a sigh.

To do him justice, he did not consider so much as another might have done the money he would get by marrying Miss Brunel: his desire to marry her was wholly selfish, but the selfishness was begotten of no greed of money.

"The trustees are as diligent in looking after the property as though it were to be given up to-morrow. And how those rents accumulate! It was Lord Belsford who proposed to use up some of the money in buying off the mortgages which still hung over the Northamptonshire estate from the time of the Marquis's father; and now that has been done, it is nothing but a huge machine turning out money for nobody's use."

The little, nervous lawyer seemed to be quite overwhelmed by the contemplation of such a thing. If he had had the option of becoming the proprietor of this valuable coining machine, he would not have allowed the opportunity to pass. And even now it occurred to him that in the event of his brother marrying Miss Brunel, and acquiring this vast wealth, the Count might, out of gratitude for the service done him in the matter, leave his £30,000 a year to the young gentleman in the adjoining drawing-room. The alternative was possible, but it was remote; John Hubbard would vastly have preferred his brother remaining unmarried.

"You know why I am so anxious to know all about this matter, Jack," said the Count, uneasily.

His brother nodded.

"It is a hazardous thing—seems to me almost impossible," continued the Count; and he was never tired of reiterating his doubts on the subject, "that such a fortune and title should belong to any body without their knowing it."

"It was her mother's wish," said John Hubbard.

"Oh, I know," said the Count, "that she has been brought up to regard with apprehension every one out of her profession; and I know she believes that under no circumstances ought she to leave the stage. And yet I fancy she will not be very grateful either to her mother, or to old Mr. Cayley, or to the trustees, for keeping her in ignorance of her good fortune. And if she should consent to be my wife, she will probably accuse me of having used the secret for my own purpose."

The Count spoke as if such an accusation would do him a great injury. But the possibility of the future he had chalked out for himself drove away this ugly afterthought. He became quite excited. His face was flushed; his hand trembled as he lifted his glass.

"God knows," he said, earnestly, "that it is not her money I want. I'm not a fortune hunter."

"You have a lot of money," said his brother, gently; while he watched his face with those mild gray eyes. "If you were to marry Miss Brunel, you could afford to part with what you have now."

"What do you take me for?" said the Count,

with a touch of virtuous indignation. "If I were to marry Miss Brunel, I should insist on her settling all her money on herself. I have enough to live upon, thank God!"

John Hubbard's mind was made up on the spot.

"You will never marry Miss Brunel, Fred," he said, quietly.

"Why?" said the other, suddenly putting down the glass he had been lifting.

"Simply because her relatives on the father's side won't allow it."

"You said they—"

"They are content to say nothing while they hope to secure the reversion of the property through Miss Brunel's dying intestate," said John Hubbard, calmly, though his eyebrows were twitching nervously. "When, however, they understand that you, a brother of mine, and therefore likely to know how matters stand, are about to marry Miss Brunel, they will inform her of her true position, and implore her not to marry a man beneath her in rank. And you know, Fred, they will be able to point to your previous silence as a witness against you."

The first impulse of Count Schönstein was to dart an angry glance at the pale, quiet little man before him, as though the latter had dealt him an unprovoked blow; then, when he saw in his brother's calm face only corroborative testimony of the appalling truth he had uttered, the Count leaned back in his chair, unable to conceal his fright and dismay.

At that moment, Master Alexander entered the room, and said,

"Please, Uncle Frederick, mamma says coffee is in the drawing-room, and will you come and have some?"

"Yes, yes, my boy," said the Count, jumping up from his chair.

He scarcely knew what he was about. John Hubbard rose also, and then they walked into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Hubbard saw something in her brother-in-law's face which she not unnaturally, but quite wrongly, attributed to his having taken too much wine.

Miss Fleet, Mrs. Hubbard's sister, was singing one of Claribel's inanities, expressing her wish that the laird might marry the lady of high degree, and declaring that, for her part, she would sooner dance upon the green with Donald. Miss Fleet's voice trembled consciously when the Count entered the room. She was a fine, roseate, country-looking woman of twenty-six or twenty-seven, much coarser and stouter than her elder sister; and she sang with those broad alternations of *piano* and *forte* which some girls, and nearly all actresses, consider to be effective. Miss Fleet, now that the Count had come in, simply roared in the louder passages, and then subsided into an almost inaudible whisper when she meant to be particularly tender.

"Thank you, thank you," said the Count, absently, when she had finished; but her ear detected no particular emphasis in the words for which she had been waiting.

Rose Villa was not a large place, but it possessed the advantage of being enclosed; and from the drawing-room one could slip out into a small garden which was quite surrounded and guarded by a row of trees. The Count sat at the French window leading out into this garden; and was so forgetful of all common politeness as to stare persistently out into the darkness, where the tall black trees were grouped in masses against the faint, twinkling sky.

Like a government suddenly knocked out of its reckoning by an adverse vote, he "wished to consider his position." There had been plenty of difficulties in the way before; but this last stumbling-block so cruelly pointed out by his brother seemed the most irremovable of all. In a moment of temporary spleen, he was almost ready to give the whole thing up; and return to—

Then a vision of that lonely great house near St. Mary-Kirby arose before him, and he shrank from the weariness and dullness of his life there, from the restless hoping against hope which he had pursued there, from the constant disappointments following his best directed efforts.

If he were to marry the girl, would not his path be clear? Beautiful in person, graceful in manner, with an intellect a thousand times superior to that of any woman she was likely to meet, he would have every reason to be proud of his wife; and then, as the husband of Lady Annie Ormond, the only daughter of the Marquis of Knottingley, and the owner of those fine estates which had such tempting shooting, would not their friendship be sought after and valued by the very persons who now, taking their cue from the Lord Chamberlain, doubtless, were graceless enough to look upon him as an interloper or adventurer?

Not by means of any chain of philosophic reasoning, but through a bitter experience, Count Schönstein had arrived at the conclusion that a large sum of money, *per se*, was not happiness. It was doubtless very well that he could have the finest wines and cigars, drive in comfortable vehicles, and be unhampered in spending money ostentatiously; but even when he was only a tea-broker, he had a modest brougham, such wine and cigars as he required, and spent quite as much in fashionable charities as he did now. He had found out that a man can not, by doubling his income, eat two dinners a day instead of one. With thirty thousand a year he could drink no more wine than was possible to him when his annual income was to be counted in hundreds. Consequently he got tired of material pleasures which could not be increased; and sometimes he even ceased to enjoy boasting of the high prices he paid for such luxuries as he used. Like every other human being, he was forced to fix his desires upon something he did not possess; and he stupidly chose a difficult thing. Unaided, he might as well have sought to get up a crusade among Scotchmen for the restoration of the sacred stone which now rests in Westminster Abbey. He had set his heart

upon gaining admission to the aristocracy; and the moon for which he cried was to be reached by no ladder of his making.

Mrs. Hubbard thought he was ill. Having attentively but covertly regarded him for some time, she went to her husband, who was getting himself another cup of coffee.

"John," she whispered, "has your brother been drinking Miss Betham's sherry by mistake?"

"No, my dear: how could he? There was none on the table."

Off goes Master Alexander to his uncle.

"Uncle Frederick, mamma wants to know if you've been drinking Miss Betham's sherry."

"If you will tell me who Miss Betham is, I shall be able to—"

"Don't you know Miss Betham, our governess? She has some sherry every day for lunch, and nobody else will take the sherry that's kept for her, and—"

"Never mind the boy," said John Hubbard, coming hastily forward, with an awkward laugh. "It was only a joke. I said you looked as dull as though you'd been drinking Miss Betham's sherry; we *do* keep a light, wholesome wine for her, and for the servants, when they get ill, you know."

Master Alexander said nothing; but he resolved to inform Miss Betham of the "crammer" his papa had made use of. Nor did uncle Frederick care to ask how a light and wholesome wine (which in reality would have blushed at the sight of a grape) was likely to have made him ill.

The Count rose abruptly, opened the glass door, and, without a word of apology to the ladies, beckoned his brother to follow. They passed out into the garden, and the Count began to pace heavily up and down the gravelled pathway under the trees.

"I can't afford to give up this so easily as you seem to think, Jack," he said; and he spoke roughly and angrily.

"I always knew you had a strong will, Frederick," said his brother, gently.

"I've set my heart on it, I tell you. What's the use of my money to me? D—n it, Jack, I might as well be down in Thames Street again."

"Few people would grumble if they had your good luck," said the elder brother, in his mildest voice.

"I don't care what few people, or what many people, would do. I know that when I make up my mind to a thing, I stick to it; and instead of you sitting quietly by and throwing obstacles in my way, the least you ought to do would be to help me."

"You're very unfair, Fred," said John Hubbard, in an injured tone; "wasn't I the first to tell you about Miss Brunel? And now—"

"And now you try to throw cold water on the whole affair. But I am not a child. Miss Brunel's friends may be very aristocratic and very fine; but they have not all the power in their hands. Look here, Jack, what's to prevent

my marrying Miss Brunel before they know any thing about it; and after the marriage is over they may make what disclosures they please. I shall be beforehand with them."

"Are you sure that Miss Brunel will marry you, Fred?" said his brother, insidiously.

The Count laughed out, in his stormy and contemptuous way.

"Your brain has been turned, Jack, by hearing of that one actress who refused a lot of money. Take my word for it, you will never hear of another. If I offer Annie Brunel Balnacloth Place, my house in Bayswater, the place over in Baden, what horses and carriages she pleases, with as much company at home and gadding about abroad as she can wish for, I am not very apprehensive about her answer. When we were younger, Jack, we could have imagined some Joan of Arc declining these things; but now we know better."

"It is a strong temptation," said his brother, absently: he did not like to say how very certain he considered Annie Brunel's acceptance of the offer.

"And besides," added the Count, with virtuous warmth, "I do not think I flatter myself when I look upon the money as not the only inducement. I'll make as good a husband to her as any one I know; and I don't think my disposition is quarrelsome or niggardly. And besides, Jack, she must remember that it is not every one who would marry an actress, and consent never to look into her past life, which in the case of an actress must have been made up of a good many experiences, you know. Of course I don't mean to depreciate her. She is doubtless a very honest, and good, and ladylike girl; but still—she mustn't expect too much."

And the Count was quite honest in making this ingenuous speech. He rather considered himself a praiseworthy person in stooping to this unequal match. He had not the least perception of the selfishness of the view he took of the whole matter. It was quite natural to him to think only of his own ends and purposes, and he took no shame to himself for it. He never for a moment regarded the scheme from her point of view, nor staid to inquire what might be the possible results of it where she was concerned. He did not even consider what her regard for him would probably be after she discovered the reasons which had induced him to marry her; nor that she was likely to have little respect for a man who had played upon her ignorance to further his own designs. The Count was conscious of acting quite honestly (to his own nature); and never thought that any one would accuse him of deceit in so doing.

CHAPTER X.

MISS BRUNEL AT HOME.

WILL ANERLEY did not forget his promise to visit Annie Brunel, but he seemed in no hurry to

fulfill it. Had he been a young man about town, the temptation of having something special to say at his club or at dancing parties about the new actress, of whom every body was talking, would have proved too much for him. When a man, however, spends most of his dancing years abroad, and gets a good deal knocked about the world, he ceases to long for the petty celebrity of social gossip, and has no great desire to become a temporary hero among a lot of well-meaning but not very profound people, who are sure to mispronounce his name and take him for somebody else.

It happened one morning, however, that he had been invited to breakfast with a noble lord, then in the government, who was desirous of getting some special information wherewith to confound an opposition member who had given notice of his intention to ask a particularly ugly question in the House. His lordship thanked Will heartily for his kindness, hoped he might be able to return the service in some slight way; hinted something about a day's fishing if Anerley happened to be in the neighborhood of a place of which he had never heard before; and then proceeded to get in order the catapult with which he hoped that evening to demolish the indiscreet member.

Having nothing particular to do just then, Will thought he would take a stroll in Kensington Gardens, and proceeded to take a short cut in that direction. Passing a little *cul-de-sac* of a street, which had not above half a dozen houses on each side, it struck him that the name on the wall was familiar to him. He then remembered that this was the place in which Annie Brunel lived; and thinking the occasion very opportune, he turned the corner and walked down to the proper house. They were very pretty little houses, with white pillars and porticoes draped with Virginian creepers, and with a good many trees around them. Miss Brunel had been fortunate enough to get the offer of one of these houses, furnished, at a moderate rent, and she and Mrs. Christmas had decided at once to accept it. It was a quiet little place, pleasantly situated, with a tolerably large garden behind.

Will passed inside the gate, and was about to ascend the steps, when the door above was opened, and a young lady came out of the house. Somehow he fancied he had seen her before—where, he knew not. She was rather an attractive-looking little person, with a pert, slightly up-turned nose, big and rather wicked blue eyes, short, loose brown curls, and a decided look of violet-powder about her forehead and neck. The saucy bright eyes looked at Will for a moment with a bold, familiar glance, and there was a shadow of a smile on her pretty lips.

Of course he took off his hat, and muttered something like "Good-morning."

"Good-morning,"—she said, holding out her hand, and looking at him with those dangerous blue eyes. "Don't you remember me?"

The moment he heard the voice, he recog-

nized it. It was the thrilling voice of "Perseus," of "Good-for-nothing" Nan, of "Peggy Green," of "The Little Rebel," of "Mrs. White," of "Fatima," of "Rose Dufard"—of Nelly Featherstone. Had her eyelashes been caked with cosmetic, her lips reddened with salve, and the violet-powder of her face tempered with glycerine and rouge, he would have recognized her at once; but there was a good deal of difference between Miss Featherstone in morning costume, with cold daylight on her face, and Miss Featherstone in the dashing and glittering garments of "Conrad the Corsair," with the glare of the footlights on her forced complexion and brilliant ornaments. For the rest, he had only heard of her as a good and well-meaning little girl, to whom nature had given a deadly pair of eyes, and a warm temperament. He was at first rather taken aback by her proffered friendship; but a few common-places relieved him from the predicament. She gave him a parting smile full of sweetness; and he went up to the door, and entered the house, leaving his card with the servant.

Presently Mrs. Christmas entered the drawing-room, and said that Miss Brunel would be glad to see him out in the garden, where she was then engaged.

"You seem to have been ill, Mrs. Christmas," said Will. "I hope that wild adventure upon Hounslow Heath had nothing to do with it."

"Indeed, I'm afraid it had, Mr. Anerley," said the little woman, whose bright eyes were unnaturally bright, her face also being unusually pale. "I have never been well since—but old folks like me mustn't complain, you know, Mr. Anerley. We mustn't complain if we get ill at times."

"I'm sorry you've been ill. You ought to go and live in the warm, fresh air of the country, when the summer's fully in."

"I've never left Miss Annie for a day since her mother died, Mr. Anerley; and I'm not going to forsake her now. It would be hard on both of us."

"But she might go with you."

"That's easy saying."

They went out, and crossed a little bit of lawn, which had a few vases upon it, and here and there a plot of spring annuals. A short distance down the side path they came to a small summer-house, which was arched over with a piece of light framework, and in front of this framework stood Annie Brunel, on a chair, tying up with loops of string the bright-leaved creepers which were yet in their erratic youth. Her hands were busy over her head, and her face was upturned, showing the fine outline of her neck and figure—a shapeliness of bust which was not lessened by a tight-fitting and pretty morning dress, which Will thought the most graceful thing he had ever seen, particularly as it caught streaks of sunlight now and again through the diamond spaces above.

When he went up to her and shook hands

with her, he fancied he observed a slight tinge of embarrassment in her face; but that quickly wore off, and she returned to her usual bright happiness of manner, continuing her work by fits and snatches. And every position into which her beautiful figure fell seemed more admirable than its predecessor.

"I wonder," thought Will, "if any man ever lifted her down from the saddle; and did he immediately die of joy?"

Perhaps he was sorry at the moment that one's descent from a chair is so obviously an easy feat.

"I am doing this out of pure mischief," she said, "and earning for myself such heaps of muttered scolding and ill-will. The gardener comes to us twice a week; and he is quite savage if I have meddled with any thing in the mean time. I can't pacify him. I have tried every means; but he is too obdurate. Miss Featherstone says I ought to hire a young gardener, and I might have the garden done any way I wished."

"Sulky servants are always the best servants," said Will, rather absently; for the clear, dark, Italian face, and the bright smile, and the white teeth oppressed him with a vague, delicious melancholy. "But a gardener, whether he is good or bad, is always sulky. My mother is afraid to touch one of the plants in the green-house until it is half-withered; and when some people come, and she carries off a lot of the plants for the hall and dinner-table, she trembles to meet the old man next morning. I suppose gardeners get so fond of their flowers as to be jealous, and jealousy is always cross. By the by, wasn't that Miss Featherstone who left as I came in?"

"Yes."

"I scarcely knew her. In fact, I only saw her once before off the stage—at that supper; and yet she was kind enough to bid me good-morning."

"Then she must have thought you were a newspaper gentleman," said Mrs. Christmas, with a good-natured little laugh. "She is very partial to them. And that one she knows just now teaches her such dreadful things, and the heedless girl repeats them wherever she goes to make people laugh. What was it she said this morning, Miss Annie? that on St. Patrick's day there were so many wicked things done in Ireland, that the recording angel had to take to short-hand."

"Well, Lady Jane," said Miss Brunel, "you need not have repeated what she said; and it's very wrong of you to say any thing against poor Nelly, who is a warm-hearted, mad little creature."

"She's not so simple as she looks," said Mrs. Christmas, nodding her head sagaciously. "I am an old woman, and I know. And the way she uses that poor young gentleman—him in the government office, who was at the supper, you know, Mr. Anerley—is downright shameful. She told me this morning that he made

her swear on an open prayer-book never to put bismuth on her arms or neck again; I suppose because he expects to marry her, and doesn't want to have her all shrivelled up, and bismuth is very bad, you know, for that; and that newspaper gentleman whom she knows said, whenever she wanted to quarrel with the poor young man, and make him believe that she had perjured herself all for the love of shiny white arms, she ought to—"

"Mr. Anerley," said the young girl, looking down from her work, "will you silence that talkative child by giving it a piece of sugar? What must you think of us actresses if she goes on like that?"

"She—bah!" said the old woman, in a melodramatic whisper, with a nod toward Miss Brunel. "She knows no more of Nelly Featherstone and the rest of 'em than an infant does. They don't talk to her like they do to an old woman like me."

"Now I have finished," said the young lady, jumping lightly down from the chair (Will did not even get the chance of taking her hand), "and we'll go inside, if you please."

"Shall I bring in the chair?" asked Will.

"Oh no. We leave the old thing out here: it is for no other use."

Somehow it seemed to be quite a valuable chair in his eyes: he would have given a good deal to be its owner just then.

As they got in-doors, Mrs. Christmas went up-stairs, and Will followed Annie Brunel into the drawing-room, which was rather prettily furnished, and had a good deal of loose music scattered about the tables and piano. He had been in finer drawin'-grooms, with grander ladies; and yet he had never before felt so rough and uncultivated. He wished he had looked particularly at his hair and mustache before coming out, and hoped they were not very matted, and loose, and reckless—which they certainly were. Indeed, he looked like some stalwart and bronzed seaman who had just come off a long voyage, and who seemed to regard with a sort of wonder the little daintinesses of land-life.

"I thought you had quite run away with my sis—with that young lady, the other evening when she went to see you," he said.

"You would have been sorry for that," she replied, with a quiet smile.

Will was not at all so pleased with the gentle, motherly tone in which she uttered these words as he ought to have been. She seemed to take it for granted that his love-secret was known to her; he would have preferred—without any particular reason—its not being known.

"What a gentle, lovable girl she is!" continued the young actress. "I never knew any one who so thoroughly won me over in a few minutes. She was so sweet, and quiet, and frank; one could tell by her face every thing she thought. She must be very sensitive and affectionate; I hope so tender a creature will never have to suffer much. And you—you must be very proud of her."

"We all are."

Miss Brunel widened her eyes slightly, but said nothing.

"By the way," said Will, with an evident effort, "I gathered together a number of Suabian peasant-songs when I was out there, which I should like to hear you sing. I know you will like them, they are so tender and simple. Dove has tried one or two of them, but her voice is scarcely low and full enough for them—"

"Dove is your *sister's* name, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And how do you know I can sing at all?" she asked, with a smile.

"As well ask a star if it has light," said he, warmly.

"You have lived too long in the East," she retorted, gently.

When Mrs. Christmas came into the room at that moment, there was a slight constraint visible upon both the young people. Will felt that he had gone a little too far; while Annie Brunel seemed to think that she had rather rudely warned him off such dangerous ground. The danger was not in the words; but in his tone.

Mrs. Christmas had just received an East London local paper, in which some youthful poet had poured forth his rhapsodies over Annie Brunel and her "Juliet." There was nothing remarkable in the verses, except that the author hoped to meet Miss Brunel in heaven. This was natural enough. The almost inevitable climax of a commonplace poem is heaven, simply because heaven is the only idealism of commonplace minds. It is almost a matter of necessity, therefore, that hymns should end with "above," or "Eden," or "Paradise;" and that magazine poets should lay down their pen with a sigh of relief when they have left their readers somewhere among the fixed stars.

"It is kind of him to suppose that an actress may get to heaven at all," said Annie Brunel, when Mrs. Christmas had read the verses.

Once or twice before Will had remarked this tendency toward bitterness of feeling in the young girl's contemplation of the non-professional world. He could not divine its cause. He was vexed to see it; and now he said boldly:

"You ought not to speak like that, Miss Brunel. You wrong both yourself and those of whom you speak. You really have imbibed, I don't know how, a singular prejudice against people out of your own profession."

"Don't they refuse in France to bury actors in consecrated ground?"

"If they did, the freaks of a clergy should never be blamed upon the people of any country. I suppose the priests, through the use of the confessional, were so dismayed about the prospects of their charge in the next world, that they thought this distinction the only piece of worldly consolation they could give them. But indeed, Miss Brunel, you must abandon that touch of Bohemianism which you unconsciously

allow to escape you sometimes, and which is unfair to—"

"I won't have you argue for these people," she said, audaciously. "I was glad you came here this morning, for I want to win you over to us. Didn't I say, Lady Jane, when I first met him, that he was so unlike the other—what shall I call them?—outsiders. Well, perhaps it is foolish of me to talk about these people, for I know nothing whatever of them; but I have been educated to consider them as so much raw material to be deluded and impressed by stage-effect, and I shall never be able to regard them as any thing else than strangers. Haven't you seen the little girl in pink cotton and spangles who stands by while her father is performing tricks before a lot of village-people? Haven't you seen her watch all the faces round, calculating the effect of the performance, and wondering how much it will produce in halfpence? No, you needn't laugh: that is precisely my attitude and feeling toward the public."

"You may tell that to one who has never seen you on the stage," said Will. "I *know* that you have no more thought of calculating the effect of what you are doing than the music of a violin has."

"That is because I am then a performer myself, and have to attend to my business. When I stand in one of the entrances, and hear the buzz of the theatre, I say to myself, 'My big children up there in the boxes, you have paid so much to be amused, and you don't care much for me; but in a few minutes I'll have you all as quiet as mice, and in a few minutes more I'll have the prettiest and best among you crying.'"

"My poor Dove's eyes were tremulous all the evening after seeing you," he said.

"I like to hear you speak kindly of her," she replied, looking him straight in the face with her clear and frank eyes. "She will need all the tenderness that friends can give her to make her life a happy one."

Will felt a dull sense of pain at his heart (why, he knew not) on hearing these true and touching words; somehow he fancied there was a sympathy almost prophetic in them.

"Come," she said, briskly, as she rose and went to the piano, "I am going to put you to the test. I make all my new friends submit to it; and accordingly as they pass through it, I regard them afterward. I am going to play three funeral marches, Handel's, Beethoven's, and Mendelssohn's. When the person experimented on performs a certain one of them, I consider her—I have not tried the experiment on a gentleman as yet—merely emotional and commonplace; therefore I don't care much for her. If she likes a certain other one, I think she is rather more intellectual, with some dramatic sensitiveness; and then I like her a good deal better. When she likes the third, though, I think she must have the divinest sympathies, and I am ready to fall in love with her."

She had sat down to the piano.

"But the peril of failure is too great; I dare not risk it," said Will. "It is as hard a trial as the three caskets in the 'Merchant of Venice;' only, if the prize were to be the same, the chance—"

He had spoken quite thoughtlessly; but he saw in a moment, by the pain and confusion of the young actress, what a blunder he had made.

"Pray don't mind what I said, Miss Brunel," he urged. "I was talking to you without thinking, as I should have talked to Dove. I will submit to the three funeral marches, if you like—"

"I will spare you," she said, good-naturedly. "If you had some of your Suabian songs here just now, I should sing them to you. But really it seems a pity to use up such fine weather indoors—are you particularly engaged to day?"

"I have no engagement if I can be of service to you."

"Mr. Anerley, I am neither a bulbul nor a gazelle. Shall I be trespassing on your time if I ask you to take a walk with me?"

"No."

"Lady Jane—Mrs. Christmas, I mean—and I take a stroll under the trees in Kensington Gardens every forenoon when I have no rehearsal."

"And I," said Will, "was on my way to the same place, for the same purpose, when I happened to see the name of the street, and thought I might venture to trespass on your patience."

So she went and dressed; and then together they passed out into the open air and the sunlight.

Will Anerley left that house a very different man from him who had entered it an hour and a half before. Nor was he conscious of the change.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE PARK.

HE was conscious only of a decided and subtle pleasure in listening to the talk of this young girl, in watching the varying expression of her face, in admiring her beautiful eyes. The easy and graceful friendship they both seemed to entertain for each other was the simplest, most natural thing in the world. There could be no danger in it. Anerley's life had been too full of action to give him the deadly gift of introspection; but in no possible mood of self-analysis could he have regarded the temporary satisfaction of being near to, and talking with, the young actress as any thing else than a pleasant and ordinary and harmless accident. He never for a moment dreamed of its producing any great result. Had the thing been suggested to him, he would have replied that both he and she understood each other perfectly; they had plenty to think of in life without indulging in folly; they had their separate work and interests and duties, and the casual pleasure they might obtain by meeting as acquaintances was nobody's concern but their own.

The first attitude of affection is exclusiveness. When one sees two young people sending glances across a dinner-table which are intelligible to themselves alone; when one perceives them whispering to each other while elsewhere the talk is general; when one observes them, on opposite sides at croquet, missing hoops, and slipping balls, and playing to aid each other in the most gratuitous, open, and unblushing manner, it needs no profound divination to detect a secret copartnership between them. Two quite unselfish lovers immediately become selfish in their united position of antagonism to the rest of the world. And when the girl is pretty, the rest of the world consider such selfishness to be simply hateful.

These two young people, who were not lovers, nor had any intention of becoming lovers, walked up Victoria Road, and so made their way into the cool green shadow of the great elms and leafy lindens which make Kensington Gardens so delightful a lounge. It was now May—the only month in which London trees seem to look cheerful—and the weather was at its freshest and best.

"Mr. Melton proposes to close the theatre in a week or so," said Annie Brunel, "for a month, in order to have it done up anew. He is very anxious that I should not accept any engagement for that month; and I have been thinking I ought to take Mrs. Christmas down to the seaside, or perhaps over to the warm banks of the Rhine for a week or two. Did you remark how very poorly she is?"

"I did," said Will. "I asked her about it. She seems to fancy that our madcap journey to Hounslow Heath brought the attack on."

"The grass was so wet, you know. I blame myself for it all; and indeed there's nothing I wouldn't do for the dear old creature. She was my only companion and friend for many a year."

"Won't you find it very dull going away all by yourselves?"

"Well, no. She is never dull. I never tire of her society a moment; she is so full of vivacity and kindness and funny stories; but I do not like the idea of our going away anywhere alone. Hitherto, you know, I have always been in a manner compelled to go by an engagement."

"Bring her down to St. Mary-Kirby, and let Dove and you go about with her."

"Thank you. You have told me so much of that quiet little valley, and the quiet way of living there, that I should feel like an evil spirit invading paradise."

"Now, now—you are at it again," he said, laughing. "I won't have you malign our honest country folks like that. My mother would make you her daughter: she has a general faculty for making pets of every body. And my father would give you a touch of the old squire-like courtesy he sometimes brings out when he is very grand and polite to some London young lady who came down to see us."

She only smiled in reply—a trifle sadly.

"I should like to see a little of that peaceful sort of life—perhaps even to try it. Day after

day to be always the same, always meeting the same people, always looking out on the same trees and fields and river, and hoping only for some change in the weather, or for a favorable turn to the fortunes of one's pet hero. But then other cares must come. That gentle little Dove, for instance, isn't she sitting just now wondering when you will come to see her, and getting quite vexed because you stay so long away?"

"You seem to have a great affection for Dove," he said.

"Haven't you?"

"Well of course; who could help it?"

"If I were a man I should not try to help it; I should be prouder of the love of such a girl than of any thing under heaven."

Such conversations are not common between young unmarried people, but neither of these two seemed to consider it strange that they should so talk; for indeed Annie Brunel assumed toward Will an amusingly matter-of-fact, kindly, almost maternal manner; so much so that, without hesitation, she would have told him that a little more attention on the brushing of his rough brown hair and mustache might not have been inappropriate before visiting a lady. Sometimes he was amused, sometimes tantalized by this tone. He was a man verging toward thirty, who had all his wits about him, who had seen plenty of the world and knew far more of its ways and beliefs and habits than he would have liked to reveal to his companion then beside him; and he could scarcely refrain from laughing at the airs of superior worldly wisdom which the young actress gave herself, revealing in the assumption the charming simplicity of her character.

They walked down one of the long avenues and crossed over into Hyde Park. The Row was very full at this time; and the brightness of the day seemed to have awaked an artificial briskness among the melancholy men and plethoric girls who had come out for their forced exercise.

"I have been in nearly every capital in Europe," said Will to his companion, "and I have never seen such a company of handsome men and women as you may see here almost any day. And I never saw anywhere people out to enjoy themselves looking so intensely sad over it."

"These are my employers," said Miss Brunel with a smile on her pale, dark face. "These are the people who pay me to amuse them."

"Look at this big, heavy man coming up now," said Will. "Look how he bobs in his saddle; one doesn't often see such a— Why it is—"

"Count Schönstein," said Miss Brunel.

It was. And as the Count came up and saw Will walking by the side of a closely veiled and gracefully dressed young lady, he took off his hat in his finest manner, and was about to ride on. Perhaps it was the luxuriant black hair, or the graceful figure, of the young girl which made him pause for a second, and recognize her.

At all events, he no sooner saw who she was than he stopped his horse, clumsily got down from the saddle, and drawing the reins over the animal's head, came forward to the railing.

"The very two people whom I wished to see," he observed with a pompous magnanimity. (Indeed there were several reasons why he was glad just then to observe that Annie Brunel had taken kindly to the young man whom he had introduced to her.) "Do you know, Miss Brunel, that Melton is going to close his theatre for a month?"

"Yes."

"Could any thing be more opportune? Now listen to what I have to propose. You want a good holiday in this fine weather. Very well. I must go over to Schönstein at once to see about some alterations and improvements I want made; and I propose to make it worth Mr. Anerley's while to go with me and superintend part of these improvements. That is an affair of necessity and business on my part and his; but why should you and Mrs. Christmas not accept our convoy over there? Even if you only go as far as one of the Rhine villages, we could see you safely that distance. Or if I could persuade you to come and see my place—such as it is—for a week or two. I think the excursion would be delightful; and if I can't entertain you as sumptuously as a king, yet I won't starve you, and I'll give you the best wine to be bought for good money in Baden."

Will colored up at the hideous barbarity of the closing sentence; but Miss Brunel answered good-naturedly:

"You're very kind indeed, Count; and I am sure the wine must be a great inducement to Mr. Anerley. But if I go anywhere for a holiday, it will be for Mrs. Christmas's sake; and I must see what she says about it first."

"Oh, if it is Mrs. Christmas," said the Count with a laugh, "I must try to persuade her."

"No; I won't have any coercion. I will place the matter before her in all its details, and she shall decide. If we don't go, I hope you'll have a pleasant journey all the same."

"And as for you, Anerley, what do you say?"

"As our arrangement will be a business matter, we'll settle it another time," said Will in a decided tone, which prevented the Count making further reference to buying and selling.

"I won't take any denial from any one of you," said the Count, with a prodigious laugh. "As for Mrs. Christmas, if that little woman dares to thwart me, I'll have her portrait published in the *Illustrated London News* as the wife of Rip van Winkle."

With which astounding witticism, the Count proceeded to get on horseback again—a rather difficult matter. Will held the stirrup for him, however; and eventually he shook himself into the saddle.

Annie Brunel had lifted her veil to speak to the Count; and as her companion now saw that there was a good deal of whispering and nodding going on among several knots of riders, he

thought it prudent to withdraw himself and her into the Park. From thence they took their way back through Kensington Gardens, and so home.

"Would it look strange in English eyes," asked Miss Brunel, frankly, "if Mrs. Christmas and I in travelling about were to visit the Count's place?"

"I don't think so," said Will. "And if it did, it wouldn't matter. I think the party would be a very merry and pleasant one; and you would not allow Mrs. Christmas to feel that for her sake you were moping alone in some dull sea-side lodgings. The Count is really very good-natured and kind; and I think you would enjoy the quaint old people and their manners down in the Black Forest."

"Have you been there?"

"Oh, yes. I have had a passing glance at every place, pretty nearly. There you may have a little deer-shooting, if you like; I have seen two ladies go out with guns, though they never did any thing beyond letting one of the guns fall and nearly killing a keeper."

"Will it be very expensive going over?" she asked quite naïvely, as though she had been calculating the propriety of accepting a country engagement.

"Not at all. Are you going to say yes?"

"If Mrs. Christmas does, I will."

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BYE.

"*Cras ingens iterabimus æquor*; do you know what that means, Dove?" asked Will.

"Something dreadful, I suppose," she said.

"*Cras*, on Monday night, *iterabimus*, I must leave, *ingens æquor*, for Germany. Didn't I say I should never leave England again without you, Dove? But this is only for a week or two, my darling; and it is on business; and I am come to crave your forgiveness and permission."

What did she say? Not one word. But, being seated at the piano just then, and having some knowledge of how she could most easily reach her lover's heart and make him sorry for his fickleness, she began to play, with great tenderness, with graceful and touching chords, that weird, wild, cruel air, "The Coulin," the old Irish air that seems to have in it all the love and agony of parting which mankind has ever experienced. It is only now and again that humanity has expressed its pain or passion in one of those strong, audible throbs—as when, for instance, God put the *Marseillaise* into the bursting heart of Rouget de Lill. One wonders how men live after writing such things.

And as for Will, he never could bear the "Coulin;" he put his hand on her shoulder, and said—

"Don't play that any more, Dove. That isn't the parting of love at all—it is the parting of death."

"Ah, why should you say that?" she said, rising and creeping close to him, with tears suddenly starting to her eyes. "Why should you say that, Will? You don't expect us to be parted *that* way?"

"Come," he said, leading her out of the drawing-room into the open air. "The man who wrote the 'Coulin' had probably a broken heart; but that is no reason why we should break ours over his misery. My father is teaching Carry and Totty to fish for sticklebacks in the pond; shall we go and help them?"

He had gone down to bid good-bye to St. Mary-Kirby and its people. The warm valley was very tempting at this time; but did not peremptory business call him away? For after the first yellow flush of the buttercups had died out of the meadows, they were growing white with the snow of the ox-eye; and the walnut-trees were changing from brown to green; and instead of the lilacs, the busy, red-budded honeysuckle was opening and burdening the air with its perfume.

Then they had fine weather just then; would it be finer on the Rhine? The white heat of mid-day was without haze. Sharp and clear were the white houses, specks only, on the far uplands; the fir-woods lay black against the blinding sky; and down here in the valley the long-grassed meadows seem to grow dark in the heat, though there was a light shimmering of sunny green, surrounding like a halo each pollard willow by the river side. In the clear pools the gray trout threw black shadows on the sand beneath, and lay motionless, with their eyes watching your every movement on the bank. St. Mary-Kirby lay hot and white among the green meadows and by the side of the cool stream; but the people of St. Mary-Kirby prayed for rain to swell the fruit of their orchards and fields.

On their way down to a little gate which, at one end of Mr. Anerley's garden, allowed you to go out upon a small bank overlooking the pond, Will explained to his companion the necessity for his going abroad, the probabilities of his stay, and so forth. She knew that he was going with Count Schönstein; but she did not know that Annie Brunel was to be of the party. Will had no particular reason for not mentioning the circumstance; but as he strictly confined himself to the business aspect of the case, Miss Brunel was somehow omitted.

Nor, when they arrived at the pond, and found Mr. Anerley superintending the operations of two young anglers, did he consider it necessary to tell his father that Annie Brunel was going with them. Perhaps she had slipped out of his mind altogether. Perhaps he fancied he had no right to reveal the Count's private arrangements. At all events, Miss Brunel's name was not at that time mentioned.

"The stickleback," observed Mr. Anerley, sententiously, when they drew near, "must be of very ancient lineage. Any long-continued necessity on the part of any animal produces a

corresponding organ or function; can you explain to me, therefore, why Scotchmen are not born with a Mackintosh?"

"No," said Dove.

"Because Nature has not had time to develop it. You observe that my stickleback here, whom I have just caught, has had time to acquire special means of defense and attack. I, a man, can only clumsily use for defense or attack, limbs which are properly adapted for other purposes—"

"Which proves that mankind has never experienced the necessity of having specially destructive organs," said Will, to Dove's great delight.

She knew not which, if either, was right; but the philosopher of Chestnut Bank had such a habit of inflicting upon his woman-kind theories which they did not understand, and could not contradict, that she had a malicious pleasure in witnessing what she supposed was his discomfiture.

"It serves you right, papa," she said. "You presume on our ignorance, when you have only mamma and me. Now you have somebody to talk to you in your own way."

"When I observed," continued Mr. Anerley, "that mankind had no special organ of attack and defense, I ought to have excluded women. The tongue of woman, an educational result which owes origin to—"

"Don't let him go on, Dove," said Will, "or he'll say something very wicked."

"Has papa been talking nonsense to you all day, Carry?" asked Dove.

"No," said the matter-of-fact Carry, "it was the story of the 'King of the White Bears.'"

"I pghesumed on thigh ignoghance," said Mr. Anerley, mimicking his adopted daughter's pronunciation.

"We must give him up, Dove," said Will. "A man who will employ ridicule in a scientific argument is not worth answering. If he were not my father, I should express my feelings more strongly; as it is—"

Here Mrs. Anerley appeared, her pretty, kindly face lit up by some unusual and pleasurable excitement. She was almost out of breath too.

"Hubert, do you know what's going to happen?"

"Never having been able, my dear, to calculate the probable line of *your* actions—"

"Be quiet. The Bishop is coming to open the church, when the alterations are complete. And, Mrs. Bexley says, that as their house is so far off, he will lunch with us."

"Dear me!" observed Mr. Anerley, "a bishop! I shall become quite respectable. What sort of wine will the exalted creature propose to drink—if a bishop drinks at all?"

"There will be several clergymen, you know, and—"

"With a bishop in the house, shall I be able to see any lesser lights? I shall allow you women to sit down in the chair he has used, as you all do when the Prince of Wales appears in pub-

lic. There is a Hindoo custom resembling this—not wholly a religious observance, you know—"

Mr. Anerley stopped, perhaps luckily; pretending to have a dreadful struggle with an obstinate stickleback.

"Mr. Bexley is charmed with the embroidery that Dove has done for the altar-cloth," continued Mrs. Anerley; "and even poor old Mr. Ribston came hobbling up to me and said 'as it was werry nice indeed, only, ma'am, I should ha' preferred it without the bits o' red, which is the mark of the Scarlet Woman. Not as I mean,' he said, 'though, that either you, ma'am, or Mrs. Bexley, would turn us into Papisches, without our knowin' of it; only there's some games up as I hear of, and one has to be p'tickler and not be mixed up wi' them as is ruinin' the Church!'"

"Very proper, too," said Mr. Anerley, having arranged the stickleback question. "I should think that old Ribston fancied he had hit you and Dove pretty hard there. Would you think Dove was a pupil of the Scarlet Woman, Carry?"

"Who is the Scarlet Woman?" said Carry, with her big brown eyes staring.

"Mother Redcap," said Mr. Anerley. "A relation of the old woman who lived in a shoe."

"Hubert," said Mrs. Anerley, sharply, "you may teach the children stickleback fishing; but you'd better leave other things alone. You may be pulling down more than you can build up again, as Mr. Ribston said about these old pillars in the nave."

"Mr. Ribston, my dear, is not a reflective man. He laments the destruction of any thing old, not seeing that as we destroy antiquities, so the years are making other antiquities. Mamma, box that girl's ears! she is laughing at me."

In the evening Will had to walk over to Balacluth Place, in order to complete the arrangements with the Count as to their starting on the Monday evening. Dove went with him; and when they got there the red sunset was flaring over the gloomy old house, and lighting up its windows with streaks of fire. Here and there, too, the tall bare trunks of one or two Scotch firs turned scarlet against the faint gray-green of the east; and the smooth river had broad splashes of crimson upon it, as it lay down there among the cool meadows, apparently motionless.

Will's reticence was unfortunate. They had scarcely begun to talk about their journey when Count Schönstein mentioned something about Miss Brunel's probable arrangements.

"Is Miss Brunel going with you?" said Dove, her soft eyes lighting up with a faint surprise.

"Yes. Didn't you know?" replied Count Schönstein. "She is going to take a short holiday, and we hope to be honored by her presence at Schönstein."

Dove looked at Will; he was examining a cartridge-pouch the Count had brought in, and did not observe her inquiring glance.

On their way home, he observed that she was very quiet. At first he thought she was sub-

duced by the exceeding beauty of the twilight, which had here and there a yellow star lying lambent in the pale gray; or that she was listening to the strong, luscious music of the night-ingales, which abound in the valley of St. Mary-Kirby. Presently, however, he saw that she was willfully silent, and then he asked her what had displeased her. Her sense of wrong was of that tremulous and tender character which never reached the length of indignation; and just now, when she wanted to be very angry with him, she merely said, not in a very firm voice—

"I did not think you would deceive me, Will."

"Well, now," he said, "you have been wasting all this beautiful time and annoying yourself by nursing your grievance silently. Why didn't you speak out at once, Dove; and say how I have deceived you?"

"You said you were going abroad on business."

"So I am."

"Count Schönstein talks as if it were merely a pleasure excursion."

"So it is, to him."

"Miss Brunel is going with you."

"Well?"

"You know quite well what I mean," she said, petulantly. "Why didn't you tell me she was going with you? Why did you conceal her going from me, as if there was no confidence between us?"

"My darling, I didn't conceal her going from you. I didn't tell you, because her going was no business of mine—because—because—"

"Because you thought I would be jealous," she said, with a little willful color in her face.

"My darling," said Will, gravely, "you don't consider what you're saying. You wrong Annie Brunel quite as much as you wrong me and yourself. I don't know what you've seen in her to warrant your supposing for an instant that—"

"Oh, Will, Will," she cried, passionately, imploringly, "don't talk like that to me, or you'll break my heart. Be friends with me, Will—dear Will—for if I'm not friends with you, what's the use of living? And I'm very sorry, Will; and I didn't mean it; but all the same you should have told me, and *I hate her!*"

"Now you are yourself, Dove," he said, laughing. "And if Miss Brunel were here just now, you would fling your arms round her neck, and beg her to forgive you."

"I am never going to fling my arms round any person's neck," said Dove, "except, perhaps, one person—that is, when the person deserves it—but I don't think he ever will; and as for Miss Brunel, I don't know what business she has going abroad just now, and I don't know why I should be so fond of her, although I hate her quite the same; and if she were here just now, as you say, I would tell her she ought to be ashamed of herself, cheating people into liking her."

"You talk very prettily, Dove; but with a

touch of incoherence. You ought to hear how Annie Brunel speaks of *you*; and you ought to know what a kindly, tender, almost motherly interest she has in you."

"Then you have seen her lately?" said Dove, peeping up.

"Yes, once or twice."

"Does she know that we are to be married?" asked Dove, looking down again.

"She knows that we are to be magghied. You foolish little darling, she saw it in your face the moment you met her; and you might have seen that she knew your secret."

"Actresses are witches, dear," said Dove, gravely. "They know every thing."

"They are like witches in having suffered a good deal of persecution at the hands of the ignorant and vulgar."

"Is that me, dear?" she asked, demurely.

"No, then, I sha'n't make fun any more. But if you're really going away on Monday evening, Will, I want to bid you good-bye to-night—and not before all the people, you know; and I'll tell you all that you have got to do when you are away in thinking about me. There's the moon getting up now behind Woodhill Church, and every night at ten, Will, all the time you are away, I'll go up to my room and look up at her, and you'll do the same, darling, won't you, just to please me? And then I'll know that my Will is thinking of me, and of St. Mary-Kirby; and then you'll know, darling, that I'm thinking of you, and if I could only send a kiss over to you, I'd do it. It won't be much trouble to you, will it? And if I'm lonely and miserable all the day, and if the 'Coulin,' that I can't help playing sometimes, makes me cry, I shall know that at ten you and I will be able to speak to each other that way—"

"I'll do every thing you ask me," said Will to her, gently; "but—but don't play the 'Coulin' any more, Dove."

"Why, dear? Ah, you said it was the parting of death. Why did you say that?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"MIT DEINEN SCHÖNEN AUGEN."

WELL, the first time Will fulfilled his promise to Dove was when he, and Annie Brunel, Mrs. Christmas and the Count (Hermann and another of the Count's servants being in another carriage) were rolling southward in the Dover express. Here and there he caught a glimpse of the moon, as it loomed suddenly and nearly over the top of some tall embankment; but somehow his attention was so much taken up by the young girl opposite him, that Dove and her pretty request were in danger of being forgotten.

Besides themselves there was only a young Frenchman in the carriage—a grave, handsome young man, with melancholy black eyes and a carefully waxed mustache—who sat and covert-

ly stared at Miss Brunel all the way. Perhaps he had seen her in the theatre; but in any case the beautiful, clear, dark artist-face of the young actress, with its large deep eyes, was quite sufficient to imbue a susceptible young Frenchman with a vague sadness. Fortunately, she dropped a glove; and he, having picked it up and handed it to her with a grave and earnest politeness, leaned back in his seat, apparently thrilled with a secret happiness.

The little party was in very good spirits; and Annie Brunel was especially bright and cheerful in her subdued, motherly way. Will suddenly found himself released from the irritating pleasure of having to humor the whims, and coax the moods of an almost childish, petulant, pretty and engaging girl; and talking instead with one who seemed to have a gift of beautifying and ennobling every thing of which she spoke. Whatever she mentioned, indeed, acquired a new importance in his eyes. He had never discovered so many things of which he would like to know more; he had never discovered that the things he did know, and the places he had seen, and the people he had met, were so full of life, and color, and dramatic interest.

"You two people talk like children going off for holidays," said the Count, disentangling himself from a series of discursive theatrical reminiscences offered him by Mrs. Christmas.

"So we are," said Annie Brunel.

The Count introduced himself into the conversation; and then the color and light seemed to Will to die out of it. The fact was, Count Schönstein was very much pleased to see that Miss Brunel took so kindly to his friend, as it rendered his own relations with her more secure. He was very grateful to Will, also, for coming with him on this particular excursion; knowing thoroughly that he could never have induced Mrs. Christmas and Miss Brunel to go with him alone. These considerations were well enough in their way; but at the same time he did not think it quite fair that Will should have all the pleasure of Miss Brunel's society to himself. To be shut out from their conversation not only annoyed him, but made him feel old. As it was, Miss Brunel had a provoking habit of speaking to him as if he really were old, and only capable of affording her information. Worst of all, she sometimes inadvertently spoke of herself and Will as "we"; and referred to the Count as if he were some third party, whom the two young people were good enough to patronize.

"But then," said the Count to himself, "she has not seen Schönstein. Anerley is perhaps a more suitable companion for her; but then she knows that he has no money, and that he has already mated himself. Once I have shown her Schönstein, I shall be able to dispense with his services: she will need no further inducement. And I never should have had the chance of showing her Schönstein, but for him."

The night was so fine that they all remained on deck during the short passage over to Calais; walking up and down in the pale moonlight,

that lay along the sea and touched the great black funnels and the tall, smooth masts and yards. Looking down upon the deck beneath, Will had seen Hermann tenderly wrap up the fat little English girl who was to be Miss Brunel's maid, and who was very melancholy indeed over parting with her mother, the Count's Kentish housekeeper; and then the stalwart keeper went forward to the bow and smoked cheap cigars fiercely for the rest of the voyage, thinking probably of the old companions he was going to see.

The Count was very quiet. He scarcely spoke. He sat down and wrapped himself up in his great Viennese travelling-coat; allowing Will and Miss Brunel to promenade all the deck. It was simply impossible for any one to become sick on such a night; but I do not think the Count considered himself quite safe, until he stood, tall, stout, and pompous, on Calais pier.

"You are a good sailor, I suppose, Anerley," he said, grandly. "I do think it ridiculous when a man can't cross the Channel without becoming sick."

"A man would have to try very hard to be sick to-night. Hermann, you speak French, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," said the tall keeper, as he bundled the trembling Polly up the gangway, and then began to look out for such articles of his master's luggage as had not been booked to Cologne.

They were going the Rhine way, instead of *via* Paris and Strasbourg; and so in due time they found themselves in the Brussels and Cologne train. We have at present nothing to do with their journey, or any incident of it, except that which befell two of the party that evening in a commonplace hotel overlooking the Rhine.

Romance in a Rhine hotel! exclaims the reader; and I submit to the implied indignation of the protest.

Perhaps the first time you saw the Rhine, you thought romance possible. Perhaps you went round that way on your wedding trip; but in any case the man who lingers about the noble river, and hides himself away from hasty tourists in some little village, and finds himself for the first time in the dreamland of the German ballad-singers, with a faint legendary mist still hanging about the brown ruins, and with a mystic glamour of witchcraft touching the green islands and the dark hills, may forget the guide-books and grow to love the Rhine. Then let him never afterward use the river as a highway. The eight or ten hours of perspiring Cockney—the odor of cooking—the exclamations and chatter—the parasol-and-smelling-bottle element which one can not help associating with the one day's journey up or down the Rhine, is a nightmare for after years. One should never visit the Rhine twice; unless one has plenty of time, no companions, an intimacy with German songs, a liking for Rüdeshheimer, a stock of English cigars, and a thorough contempt for practical English energy.

Yet it was the Rhine did all the mischief

that night. Imagine for a moment the position. They had arrived in Cologne somewhere about five in the afternoon, and had driven to the — hotel, which, as every body knows, overlooks the river. Then they had dined. Then they had walked round to the Cathedral; where the Count proudly contributed a single Friedrich toward helping King William in his efforts to complete the building. Then they had gone to one of the shops opposite, where the Count, in purchasing some photographs, insisted on talking German to a man who knew English thoroughly. Then he had stalked into Jean Marie Farina's place at the corner, and brought out one of Farina's largest bottles for Miss Brunel; he carrying it down to the hotel, the observant towns-people turning and staring at the big Englishman. By this time the sun had gone down, the twilight was growing darker, the faint lights of the city beginning to tell through the gray.

There were gardens, said the porter at the top of the hotel—beautiful gardens, looking down on the river: if the gentlemen wished to smoke, wine could be carried up.

"No," said the Count. "I shall commit the rudeness of going off to my room. I did not sleep, like you people, in the train."

So he bade them good-night and disappeared.

"But we ought to go up and see the gardens," said Annie Brunel.

"I think so," said Will. "Mrs. Christmas, will you take my arm? it is a long climb. And now that you have surrendered yourself to my care, may I recommend a luxury peculiar to the place? One ought never to sit in Rhine gardens without sparkling Muscatel, seltzer-water, and ice, to be drunk out of frosted champagne-glasses, in the open air, with flowers around us, and the river below—"

"You anticipate," said Miss Brunel. "Perhaps the gardens are only a smoking-room, filled with people."

The "gardens" turned out to be a long and spacious balcony, not projecting from the building, but formed out of the upper floor. There were tables and chairs about; and a raised seat which ran along the entire front. The pillars supporting the roof were wound round with trailing evergreens, the tendrils and leaves of which scarcely stirred in the cool night-air: finally, the place was quite empty.

Annie Brunel stepped over to the front of the balcony, and looked down; then a little cry of surprise and delight escaped her.

"Come," she said to Mrs. Christmas, "come over here; it is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen."

Beautiful enough it was—far too beautiful to be put down here in words. The moon had arisen by this time—the yellow moon of the Rhine—and it had come up and over the vague brown shadows of Deutz until it hung above the river. Where it touched the water there was a broad lane of broken, rippling silver; but all the rest of the wide, and silent stream was of a dull olive hue, on which (looking from this great height)

you saw the sharp black hulls of the boats. Then far along the opposite bank, and across the bridges, and down on the quays underneath were glittering beads of orange fire; and on the river there were other lights—moving crimson and green spots which marked the lazy barges and the steamers out there. When one of the boats came slowly up, the olive-green plain was cleft in two, and you saw waving lines of silver widening out to the bank on either side; then the throb of the paddle and the roar of the steam ceased, a green lamp was run up to the mast-head, to beam up there like a fire-fly; the olive river grew smooth and silent again; and the perfect, breathless peace of the night was unbroken. A clear, transparent night, without darkness; and yet these points of orange, and green, and scarlet burned sharply; and the soft moonlight on the river shone whiter than phosphorus. So still a night, too, that the voices on the quays floated up to this high balcony—vague, echo-like, undistinguishable.

Annie Brunel was too much impressed by the singular loveliness of the night, and of the picture before her to say any thing. She sat up on the raised bench; and looking out from between the pillars, Will could see her figure framed, as it were, by the surrounding leaves. Against the clear, dark sky her head was softly defined, and her face caught a pale tinge of the moonlight as she sat quite still and seemed to listen.

He forgot all about the iced wine and his cigar. He forgot even Mrs. Christmas, who sat in the shadow of one of the pillars, and also looked down on the broad panorama before her.

Then Miss Brunel began to talk to him; and it seemed to him that her voice was unusually low, and sad, and tender. It may have been the melancholy of the place—for all very beautiful things haunt us and torture us with a vague, wistful longing—or it may be that some old recollections had been awakened within her; but she spoke to him with a frank, close, touching confidence, such as he had never seen her exhibit to any one. Nor was he aware of the manner in which he reciprocated these confidences; nor of the dangerous simplicity of many things he said to her—suggestions which she was too much pre-occupied to notice. But even in such rare moments as these, when we seem to throw off the cold attitudinizing of life and speak direct to each other, heart to heart, a double mental process is possible, and we may be unconsciously shaping our wishes in accordance with those too exalted sentiments born of incautious speech. And Will went on in this fashion. The past was past; let no harm be said of it; and yet it had been unsatisfactory to him. There had been no generous warmth in it; no passionate glow; only the vague commonplaces of pleasure, which left no throb of regret behind them. And now he felt within him a capacity, a desire, for a fuller and richer life—a new, fresh, hopeful life, with undreamed-of emotions and sensations. Why should he not leave England forever? What was Eng-

land to him? With only one companion, who had aspirations like his own, who could receive his confidences, who might love with a passion strong as that he knew lay latent in his own heart, who had these divine, supreme sympathies—

He was looking up at the beautiful face of the young girl, cold and clear-cut like marble, in the moonlight; and he was not aware that he had been thinking of her. All at once that horrible consciousness flashed in upon him like a bolt of consuming fire; his heart gave one big throb, and he almost staggered back as he said to himself, with remorse, and horror, and shame—

“O God, I love this woman with my whole soul; and what shall I say to my poor Dove?”

She sat up there, pure and calm, like some glorified saint, and saw nothing of the hell of contending emotions which raged below in her companion's breast. Unconscious of it all, she sat and dreamed the dreams of a happy and contented soul. As for him, he was overwhelmed with shame, and pity, and despair. And as he thought of Dove, and St. Mary-Kirby, the dull, sonorous striking of some great bell suddenly reminded him of his promise.

He hastily pulled out his watch—half past ten, English time. She, down in the quiet Kentish vale, had remembered his promise (indeed, had she not dreamed of it all day?)—had gone to her window, and tenderly thought of her lover, and with happy tears in her eyes, had sent him many a kindly message across the sea; *he*—what his thoughts had been at the same moment he scarcely dared confess to his awakened self.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OUTCAST.

“QUITE true, my dear,” said Mr. Anerley, gently. “If I had risen at six, gone and dipped myself in the river, and then taken a walk, I should have been in a sufficiently self-satisfied and virtuous frame of mind to have accompanied you to church. But I try to avoid carnal pride. Indeed, I don't know how Satan managed to develop so much intolerable vanity, unless he was in the habit of rising at a prodigiously early hour and taking a cold bath.”

“Oh, papa, how dare you say such a thing?” said a soft voice just beside him; and he turned to the open breakfast-room window to see Dove's pretty face, under a bright little summer bonnet, looking in at him reproachfully.

“Come, get away to church, both of you,” he said. “There goes the cracked bell.”

So Mrs. Anerley and Dove went alone to church; the former very silent and sad. The tender little woman could do nothing for this husband of hers—nothing but pray for him, in an inaudible way, during those moments of solemn silence which occur between divisions of the service.

A quarter of an hour afterward Mr. Anerley rose, and also walked along to the little gray building. All the people by this time were inside; and as he entered the church-yard, the choir was singing. He sat down on one of the gravestones that were placed among the long, green, rank grass; and having pulled his straw hat over his forehead, to shelter his eyes and face from the strong sunlight, he listened, in a dreamy way, to the sweet singing of the children, and the solemn and soft intoning of the organ.

It was his favorite method of going to church.

“You get all the emotional exaltation of the service,” he used to say, “without having your intellect ruffled. And when the children have done their singing, instead of listening to a feeble sermon, you sit out in the clear sunlight and look down on the quiet valley, and the river, and the trees.”

So he sat, and listened and dreamed, while the softened music played upon his fancies, and produced a moving panorama of pious scenes—of the old Jew-life, the early Christian wanderings, the mediæval mysteries, and superstitions, and heroisms.

“How fortunate religion has been,” he thought, “to secure the exclusive aid of music and architecture! Philosophy and science have had to fight their way single-handed; but she has come armed with weapons of emotional coercion to overawe and convince the intellectually unimpressionable. In a great cathedral, with slow, sonorous chanting reverberating through the long stone galleries, and tapers lit in the mysterious twilight, every man thinks it is religion, not art, which almost forces him down upon his knees.”

Here the music ceased abruptly, and presently there was a confused murmur of syllables—the clergyman either preaching or reading.

“Sermons are like Scotch bagpipes,” said Mr. Anerley to himself, as he rose and left the church-yard to wander down to the river-side. “They sound very well when one doesn't hear them.”

That very day there was a conspiracy formed against the carnal peace of mind of this aimlessly speculating philosopher. Mr. Bexley's sermon had been specially touching to the few ladies who attended the little church; and the tender, conjugal soul of Mrs. Anerley was grieved beyond measure as she thought of the outcast whom she had left behind. Rhetorical threats of damnation passed lightly over her; indeed, you can not easily persuade a woman that the lover of her youth has any cause to fear eternal punishment: but a far less sensitive woman than Mrs. Anerley might well have been saddened by that incomprehensible barrier which existed between her and her husband.

“And it is only on this one point,” she thought to herself, bitterly. “Was there ever such a husband as he is—so forbearing, and kind, and generous? Was there ever such a father as he has shown himself to be, both to

Will and to this poor Dove? And yet they talk of him as if he were a great sinner; and I know that Mrs. Bexley said she feared he was among the lost."

Be sure Mrs. Bexley did not gain in Mrs. Anerley's esteem by that unhappy conjecture. From the moment of its utterance, the two women, though they outwardly met with cold courtesy, were sworn enemies; and a feud which owed its origin to the question of the eternal destiny of a human soul, condescended to exhibit itself in a bitter rivalry as to which of the two disputants should be able to wear the most stylish bonnet. Was it the righteousness of her cause, or her husband's longer purse, which generally gave Mrs. Anerley the victory over the chagrined and mortified wife of the pastor?

But with Mr. Bexley, Mrs. Anerley continued on the most friendly terms; and on this day, so anxious was she, poor soul, to see her husband united to her in the bonds of faith, that she talked to Mr. Bexley for a few minutes, and begged him to call round in the evening and try the effect of spiritual counsel on this sheep who had wandered from the fold.

Mr. Bexley was precisely the man to undertake such a responsibility with gladness—nay, with eagerness. Many a time had he dined at Mr. Anerley's house; but being a gentleman as well as a clergyman, he did not seek to take advantage of his position and turn the kindly after-dinner talk of the household into a professional *séance*. But when he was appealed to by the wife of the mentally sick man he responded joyously. He was a very shy and nervously sensitive man—as you could have seen from his fine, lank, yellow hair, the singular purity of his complexion, the weakness of his eyes, and a certain spasmodic affection of the corner of his lips—but he had no fear of ridicule when he was on his Master's service. Mr. Anerley and he, indeed, were great friends; and the former, though he used to laugh at the clergyman's ignorance of guns and rods, and at his almost childish optimism, respected him as one honest man respects another. The rationalist looked upon the supernaturalisms of this neighbor of his with much curiosity, some wonder, and a little admiration. Yet he never could quite account for these phenomena. He could not understand, for instance, why one of the most subtle and dispassionate minds of our day should sadly address an old friend as from the other side of the grave, simply because the latter was removed from him by a few (to Mr. Anerley) unimportant and merely technical doctrinal points. Mr. Bexley was a constant puzzle to him. Indeed, the firmest facts in Mr. Bexley's theory of life were what a sensationalist would at once put down as delusions or mere hypotheses. He was full of the most exalted ideas of duty, of moral responsibility, of the value of fine shades of opinion and psychological experience. He worshiped Dr. Newman, whose verses he regarded as a new light thrown upon the history of the soul. He had a passionate admiration

for the *Spectator*; and shed, at least, a good deal of political enlightenment upon his parish by insisting on the farmers around reading each number as it was sent down from London. Mr. Bexley ought never to have been in the service of a State church. He had the "prophetic" instinct. Proselytism came as natural to him as the act of walking. He abhorred and detested leaving things alone, and letting them right themselves. This Kentish Jonah found a Nineveh wherever he went; he was never afraid to attack it single-handed; and most of all, he raised his voice against the materialists and sensationalists—the destroyers of the beautiful idealisms of the soul.

When one's wife and her favorite clergyman enter into league against one's convictions, the chances are that the convictions will suffer. Such combinations are unfair. There are some men, for example, who would refuse to be attended by a doctor who was on very friendly terms with an undertaker; they fear the chance of collusion.

It was almost dusk when Mr. Bexley went round to Chestnut Bank, and then he found Mr. Anerley seated outside, on a carved oaken bench, under some lime-trees fronting the lawn. He was alone, and on the rude table before him were some decanters and bottles, one or two fruit-plates, and a box of cigars.

"Oh, good-evening, Mr. Bexley," said the lost one; "will you have a cigar?"

"Thank you."

"Sit down. That's claret next yon, and there's still some sparkling Burgundy in the bottle. The children are very fond of it—I suppose because it looks like currant-jelly in hysterics."

Cigars and claret don't seem quite the avenue by which to approach an inquiry into the condition of a man's soul; but Mr. Bexley was too excited to heed what he did. He had the proselytizing ecstasy upon him. He was like one of the old crusaders about to ride up to the gate of a godless Saracen city and demand its surrender. Did not Greatheart, when about to engage with the giant, refresh himself with the wine which Christiana carried?

"You were not at church this morning," he said, carelessly.

But his assumed carelessness was too evident; his *forte* was not diplomacy.

"Well, no," said Mr. Anerley, quietly: he did not take the trouble to reflect on the object of the question, for he had been considering graver matter when Mr. Bexley arrived.

"You have not been to church for a long time," continued the yellow-haired, soft-voiced preacher, insidiously but nervously. "Indeed, you don't seem to think church-going of any importance."

Mr. Anerley made no answer. Then the other, driven out of the diplomatic method of approach into his natural manner, immediately said:

"Mr. Anerley, do you never think that it is

a man's duty to think about things which are not of this world? Do you expect always to be satisfied with worldly good? You and I have had long conversations together; and I have found you so reasonable, so unprejudiced, so free to conviction, that I am amazed you do not recognize the necessity of thinking of something beyond this life that we lead just now."

"Can not people think of these things outside a church, Mr. Bexley?" he said; but his face was quite grave, if not sad. "As you came into the garden just now, I was perplexing myself with that very question. I was sitting wondering if I should die and become nothing without having discovered how it was I came to live. It seems so singular that one should pass out of consciousness into the inorganic earth without having discovered what the earth is, and without having the least notion of how he himself came to be. Geology only presents you with a notion of tremendous time and change—it gives no clue to the beginning. And if there was no beginning, how is it that my brief consciousness only flickers up for a short time, and dies down again into darkness and night? How did there come to be a beginning to my consciousness?"

Mr. Bexley was astounded and grieved. He was accustomed, even in that little parish, to find people who had painful doubts about the Mosaic record of creation, who seemed perplexed about the sun, moon, and stars having all been created in order to light up the earth, and who accepted with joy and gladness any possible theory of reconciliation which gave them a more rational view of the world and their belief in the Bible at the same time. But he had not met a man who had passed to one side, as quite unworthy of attention; all theologic solutions of the difficulty whatever.

The very novelty of the obstacle, however, only excited his evangelical fervor. He avowed his object in having visited Chestnut Bank that evening (without, however, revealing at whose suggestion he had undertaken the task), and boldly endeavored to grapple with the demon of unbelief which had possession of his friend's mind. He insisted on the fallibility of human reason. He pointed out that, without religion, morality was unable to make its way among the uneducated. He demonstrated that every age had its own proper religion, and that an age without a religion was on the brink of suicide. All these things, and many more, he urged with much eloquence and undoubted sincerity, and at the end he was surprised to learn that his auditor quite coincided with every thing he had uttered.

"I know," he said, "that the present attitude of the majority of intellectual men in this country is a dangerous and impossible one. Men can not live in an atmosphere of criticism. What we want just now is a new gospel fitted for the times; we want a crusade of some sort—a powerful belief that will develop all sorts of sympathetic emotions and idealisms, instead of leaving

one a prey to cold analysis. But we haven't got it; and those who have gone beyond this tidal flow of the last great religious flood, find themselves stranded on dry land, without a blade of grass or a drop of water in sight. Give me a gospel, and I'll take it with pleasure. Whether it be a new series of religious symbolisms, or a splendid system of ethics, demanding action, or even a belief in humanity as a supreme and beautiful power—any thing that can convince me and compel me to admire, I will take. But I don't want to deal in old symbols, and old beliefs, and old theories, that fit me no more than the monkey-jacket in which my mother sent me to school."

"You say you have got beyond us, and yet you acknowledge that you have been disappointed," urged Mr. Bexley. "Why not return to the Church, if only for personal satisfaction? You can not be happy in your present position. You must be tormented by the most fearful doubts and anticipations. Are you not afflicted by moments of utter darkness, in which you long for the kindly hand of some spiritual authority to assist you and comfort you? In such perilous moments I believe I should go mad if I were to assure myself, for a single passing instant, that I was alone and unaided—that I had been teaching lies and superstitions all my life—that the world was a big machine, and we the accidental dust thrown out by its great chemic motions—that all the aspirations of our soul, and the voice of conscience, and the standards of right at which we aim—were all delusions and mockeries. I would not have life on such terms. I should know that I only existed through the brute ignorance and superstition of my stronger-made fellow-men not permitting them to kill me and all such as I, and then to seize our means of living. I should look forward to the time when these superstitions should be cleared away, and the world, become a general scramble, handed over to those who had the longest claws and the fiercest teeth."

"Then," said Mr. Anerley, with a smile, "if the first glimpse of change is likely to derange your intellect in that fashion, and force you to so many absurd conclusions, you are better where you are. And about those moments of spiritual darkness, and torture, and longing of which you speak—I do not understand what they are. I am never visited by them. I thank God I have a tolerable digestion."

"Digestion!" repeated the other, bitterly. "It all comes to that. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow ye die; and the only resurrection you hope for is to breathe the sunlight again as a buttercup or a dandelion. What is it, may I ask, entices you to remain in the position you occupy—that of being an honest man, credited with constant generous actions, kindly to your inferiors, and what not? Why should you be moral at all? Why should you not, if it pleased you, go into any depths of dissipation and debauchery? There is nothing to restrain you."

"Pardon me, there is. If it were worth the trouble, I dare say I could convince you that my code of morality is not only more comprehensive and more strict than yours, but that it rests on more explicable and more permanent foundations. But it is not worth the trouble to convince a single man at a time in which we are waiting for some great and general renovation."

So they went on, in the faint darkness, under the black branches and the gray sky. Mr. Bexley was not going to relinquish hope at the very outset; and he proceeded from point to point, adducing all the considerations which made it very much more advantageous to be orthodox than to be not orthodox. He might have persuaded a man who was hovering between the two states to go over to the bosom of the church; but his entreaties, and representations, and arguments had little effect upon a man who was separated from him by the great chasm of a dawn-*ing* era.

"Perhaps I may lament my present negative, critical attitude," said Mr. Anerley, quite frankly, "but I prefer it to yours. The successive tides of faith which pass over the world leave little circling eddies, and I have been caught in one of these; I can not tell in what direction the next great movement will be—I only know I shall not see it."

The end of it was, just then, that Mr. Anerley begged of his neighbor and counsellor to go indoors and have some supper with them. Mr. Bexley, a little disheartened, but still confident in his spiritual power to overcome, sometime or other, the strong resistance of the unconverted man's heart, agreed; and so they both went into the house and entered the dining-room, where the supper-table had just been prepared. Mrs. Anerley started up, with her face red as fire, when she saw her husband and the clergyman enter together; and this obvious departure from her usual self-possessed and easy manner at once struck Mr. Anerley as being very peculiar. Nay, the poor little woman, feeling herself very guilty—harboring a secret notion that she had tried to entrap her generous and open-minded husband—was more than ordinarily attentive and courteous to him. She was far more civil, and obliging, and formal toward him than toward her stranger guest; and she never by any chance lifted her eyes to his.

Mr. Anerley saw it all, understood it all, and thought of it with an inward, pitying smile that was scarcely visible upon his lips. "There is a creature," he said to himself, "who might convert any man to any thing, if she had the least logical chance on her side."

He saw also, or perhaps feared, that this embarrassment and restraint would only make her uncomfortable for the evening; and so, in his kindly way, he called Dove to him. The young girl went over to him, and he put his arm round her waist, and said:

"Do you see that small woman over there, who looks so guilty? She is guilty; and that gentleman there, whom you have been accusom-

ed to regard as the very pattern of all the virtues in the parish, is her accomplice."

Mrs. Anerley started again, and glanced in a nervous way toward Mr. Bexley. Even her desire for her husband's salvation was lost in the inward vow that never, never again would she seek for aid out of the domestic circle.

"Their secret having been found out, Dove, it remains to award them their punishment. In my royal clemency, however, I leave the sentence in your hands."

"What have they been doing, papa?"

"Ask them. Call upon the female prisoner to stand forward and say why sentence should not be pronounced against her."

"It is not a subject for merriment, Hubert," said his wife, blushing hotly, "and if I did ask Mr. Bexley to speak to you as a friend—"

"You hear, Dove, she confesses to the conspiracy, and also criminales her fellow-prisoner. If I had a black cowl, and some sherry at 12s. a dozen, I should sentence them to drink half a bottle each; having first bidden them a final farewell."

"As it is, papa," said Dove, maliciously, "you had better give them some of that white Hungarian wine you are so fond of, and if they survive—"

"Mamma, order this girl to bed."

"That is what poor papa says whenever any one beats him in an argument or says his wine isn't good," said Dove to Mr. Bexley.

But she went, nevertheless. For it was nearly ten o'clock, and although there was only a faint sickle of the moon now visible, that was still big enough to bear the thin thread of thought which so subtly connected her and her lover. She took out of her bosom a letter which she had received that morning, and she kissed it and held it in her hand, and said, looking up to the pale starlight and the clear white crescent:

"Moon, moon, will you tell him that I've got his letter, and that I've read it twenty times—a hundred times—over, and yet he doesn't say a word about coming home? Will you ask him when he is coming back to me—and tell him to come quick, quick, for the days are getting wearier and wearier? Couldn't you come down for a little minute, and whisper to me, and tell me what he has been doing all this time, and what he is looking like, and what he is saying to you just now? Couldn't you give me a little glimpse of him, instead of keeping him to yourself, and staring down as if you didn't see any thing at all? And you might as well tell him that I shall begin and hate Miss Brunel if he doesn't come back soon—and I'll play the 'Coulin' all day to myself when I'm alone, and be as miserable and wretched as ever I please. But here is a kiss for him anyway: and you wouldn't be so cruel as not to give him that!"

And Dove, having completed her orisons, went down-stairs, with a smile on her sweet face; perhaps not thinking that the nightly staring at the moon, as the reader may perhaps sus-

pect, had somewhat affected her brain. And she found Mr. Bexley more brilliant and eloquent than ever in his exposition of certain spiritual experiences; and she was in such a mood of half-hysterical delight and happiness that she could have put her arm round Mr. Anerley's neck and begged him, for her sake, to be a little, just a little, more orthodox. As it was, he had promised to go inside the church next Sunday; and his wife was very happy.

CHAPTER XV.

SCHÖN-ROHTRAUT.

Do you know the ballad of "Schön-Rohtraut"—the king's daughter who would neither spin nor sew, but who fished, and hunted, and rode on horseback through the woods, with her father's page for her only companion? Was there any wonder that the youth grew sad, and inwardly cried to himself,

"Oh dasz ich doch ein Königssohn wär,
Rohtraut, Schön-Rohtraut lieb' ich so sehr,
Schweig stille, mein Herze!"

One day they rested themselves under a great oak, and the merry Schön-Rohtraut laughed aloud at her woe-stricken page and cried:

"Why do you look at me so longingly? If you have the heart to do it, come and kiss me then!"

Whereupon the lad, with a terrible inward tremor, probably, went up and kissed Schön-Rohtraut's laughing lips. And they two rode quite silently home; but the page joyously said to himself, "I do not care now whether she were to be made Empress to-day; for all the leaves in the forest know that I have kissed Schön-Rohtraut's mouth."

There are many of us whose chief consolation it is to know that we have kissed Schön-Rohtraut's mouth. The middle-aged man, getting a trifle gray above the ears, sits by the fire of a winter evening and thinks of his own particular Schön-Rohtraut.

"I did not marry her; but I loved her in the long bygone time, and that is enough for me. I had my 'liberal education.' If I had married her, perhaps I should not be loving her now; and all my tender memories of her, and of that pleasant time, would have disappeared. But now no one can dispossess me of the triumphant consciousness that it was my good fortune to have kissed Schön-Rohtraut's mouth."

There is much sympathy abroad upon this matter; and I think we men never get nearer to each other than when we talk, after our wives have gone up-stairs to bed, of our lost loves.

This was partly what Will Anerley said to himself as the little party sat under the white awning of the *König Wilhelm*, and slowly steamed up the blue waters of the Rhine. Not without a tremor of conscience he said it; for he had a vague impression that he had been wantonly cruel to Dove. In the first moments of

remorse, after awaking to a sense of his present position, he had said:

"There remains but one thing to be done. I shall at once return to England, and see Annie Brunel no more."

But a man approaching thirty has taught himself to believe that he has great fortitude, especially where his tenderer emotions are concerned; and his next reflection was:

"My sudden departure will only be a revelation to her, and happily she knows nothing about it. Besides, have I not sufficient strength of mind to spend a few days in the pleasant society of this young girl, without committing myself? The mischief is done, and I must suffer for my carelessness; but—"

But he would go on to Schönstein all the same, whither the two ladies had also consented to go. He did not deceive himself when he submitted to his own conscience this theory. He knew there was no danger of his disturbing Miss Brunel's peace of mind, and he knew that Dove would have no further injustice done her. It was he who was to suffer. His thoughtlessness had permitted the growth of a hopeless passion: it would never be known to her who had inspired it, nor to her whom it had dispossessed. He only should carry about with him the scourge; and he was not without a hope that time and travel would for once accommodate themselves to an absurd superstition and cure him of an unfortunate love.

For the rest, he was almost glad that he had mentally kissed Schön-Rohtraut's mouth. The consciousness of this passionate and hopeless attachment was in itself a pure and elevated feeling—a maiden delight which had no earthly element mixed with it. It was so different from the kindly, affectionate interest he took in Dove—so different from that familiar liking which made him think nothing of kissing the young girl in an easy, fraternal way. To think of kissing Miss Brunel! The page could only look wonderingly and longingly at his beautiful mistress, at her pretty lips and nut-white teeth, and say, "Schweig' stille, mein Herze!"

Quite assured of his own strength of will, he did not seek for a moment to withdraw himself from her, or raise any subtle barrier between them. In fact, he laughingly explained to himself that as compensation for the pain which he would afterward have to suffer, he would now sup to the full the delicious enjoyment of her society. He would study as much as he chose the fine artistic head, the beautiful, warm, Italian color of her face, and her charming figure; and he would gaze his fill into the deep-gray eyes, which were always brightened up by an anticipatory kindness when he approached. He remarked, however, that he had never seen them intensified by that passionate glow which he had observed on the stage—the emotional earnestness which belonged to what she called her "real life;" there was in the eyes merely a pleased satisfaction and good-nature.

"When shall we get away from the Rhine?"

she asked, as they were sailing past the Lorelei-berg.

"To-night," said the Count, "we shall stop at Mayence, and go on by rail to Freiburg to-morrow. Then we shall be away from the line of the tourists."

This was an extraordinary piece of generosity and concession on the part of Count Schönstein; for there was scarcely any thing he loved more dearly on earth than to linger about the well known routes, and figure as a German Count before the Cockney-tourists who crowded the railway stations and *tables d'hôte*.

"I am so glad," said Miss Brunel. "I can not bear to be among those people. I feel as if I were a parlor-maid sitting in a carriage with her master and mistress, and fancying that she was being stared at for her impertinence by every passer-by. Don't tell me it is absurd, Mr. Anerley; for I know it is absurd. But I can not help feeling so all the same. When any body stares at me, I say to myself, well, perhaps you've paid five shillings to stare at me in the theatre, and you think, of course, you have the same right here."

Will was very vexed to hear her speak so, partly because he knew that no reasoning would cure her of this cruel impression, and partly because he knew that she had some ground for speaking as she did. Continually, along that insufferably Cockney-route, he had seen her stared at and ogled by lank youths from Oxford Street or Mincing Lane, who had got a holiday from counter or desk, and had hoisted a good deal of bunting to celebrate the occasion—bright green ties, striped collars, handkerchiefs marked with Adelina Patti's portrait, white sun-hats with scarlet bands, yellow dust-coats and dogskin gloves. In the intervals between their descents to the cabin, where they drank cognac in preference to "that beastly sour ock-wine," they would sit at a little distance, suck fiercely at their twopenny cigars, and stare at the young actress as they were accustomed to stare at the baboons in the Zoological Gardens, or at the Royal Family, or at their favorite barmaid. Then would follow confidential communications to En'ry or Arry that she was very like "Miss Trebelli," and another head or tails for another "go" of brandy.

"If these creatures were to get to heaven," said Anerley to the Count, in a moment of jealous spleen, "they would ask their nearest way to the Philharmonic Music-hall."

It was partly this semi-Bohemian feeling which drew the young artiste toward Count Schönstein and Will Anerley, and allowed her to relish the society of people "out of the profession." Of the personal history of the Count she had got to know something; and while she tolerated his amusing self-sufficiency and admired his apparent good-nature and even temper, she almost sympathized with him in his attitude toward society. It was the same people whom she had been taught to distrust, who were in league against the poor Count. They would

not permit him to mix in their society, because, like herself, he was an adventurer, a person whose position was not secured to him by an ancient royal grant. Will she looked upon in another fashion.

"You have been so much abroad and mixed with so many people, that you seem not to belong to England. There is nothing English about you—nothing of vanity, and self-importance, and suspicion of outsiders."

But against this praise, as against the whole tone of her mind on the subject, he had uttered many a serious protest.

"You blame us English with the impertinences of a few boys out for a holiday. You have heard stories of actors and actresses having received injuries from persons out of the profession; and you necessarily think there must be a mutual antagonism between the classes."

"I don't think any thing about it," she used to say, "I only know what my impression is, however it has been taught me. And I know that there is no sympathy between me and the people whom I try to amuse; and that they despise me and my calling. I don't blame them for it; but how can you expect me to like them? I don't say they are narrow-minded, or prejudiced; but I know that an English lady would not sit down to dinner with an actress, that an English mother would think her son lost if he married an actress; and that a girl in good society who marries an actor is thought to have done something equivalent to running away with her father's footman."

These were the bitter precepts which the Marchioness of Knottingley had left with her daughter; and they had been instilled into the girl at a time when beliefs become part of our flesh and blood.

"They are ignorant and ill-educated women who think so," said Will, calmly; "but you do an injustice to women of education, and good taste, and intelligent sympathies when you suppose that every one—"

"Let us take your own mother," said Annie Brunel, hastily. "Would she be anxious, supposing she knew me, to introduce me to the rest of her acquaintances? Would she ask me to visit her? Would she be willing that I should be a companion to that pretty little Dove?"

"I think I have answered all these questions before," said Will. "I tell you I can't answer for all the women of England; but for those of them whom I respect I can answer, and my mother is one of them. Has she not already allowed Dove to make your acquaintance?"

"Because I was a curiosity, and she was allowed to come and look at me in my cage," said the actress, with that cruel smile on her lips.

"Miss Brunel," said Will, simply and frankly, "you are exhibiting far more prejudice than you will find in the women you speak about. And I don't know whether you will forgive my saying that it seems a pity one of your years should already possess such suspicious and opinions of other people—"

Wherewith she looked him straight in the face, with a clear, searching glance of those big and honest eyes of hers, which would have made a less disinterested advocate falter.

"Are you telling me what you believe to be true?" she said.

"Could I have any object in deceiving you?"

"You believe that your mother, a carefully pious and correct lady, who has lived all her life in the country, would dare to avow that she knew an actress?"

"She would be proud to avow it."

"Would she take me to church with her, and give me a seat in her pew, before all her neighbors?"

"Certainly she would."

"And what would they think?"

"Perhaps the parish clerk's wife," said Will, with a mental glance at Mrs. Bexley, "and the vet.'s wife, and a few women of similar extraction or education, might be shocked; but the educated and intelligent of them would only be envious of my mother. Wherever you go, you will find people who believe in witches, and the eternal damnation of unconverted niggers and the divine right of the nearest squire; but you don't suppose that we are all partial idiots? And even these people, if you went into the St. Mary-Kirby church, would only have to look at you—"

"You said something like that to me before," she replied, with the same nervous haste to exhibit every objection—was it that she the more wished them to be explained away?—"and I told you I did not think much of the charity that was only extended to me personally because my face was not old and haggard. Suppose that I were old, and painted, and—"

"But if you were old, you would not be painted."

"I might."

"In that case, all the women would have some ground to be suspicious of you; and many of them would be angry because you were allowed a luxury denied them by their husbands. Really, Miss Brunel, you do the 'outsiders' an injustice," he added, warming to his work. "Stupid people and uneducated people do not care for nice discriminations. They have always decided opinions. They like to have clear lines of thought and positive decisions. They ticket things off, and stick to their classifications through thick and thin, as if they were infallible. But you do wrong to care for the opinion of the stupid and uneducated."

"I should like to believe you; but how can I? If, as you say, we have fallen so low as even to earn the contempt of the stupid—"

"My darling," he said, and then he stopped as if a bullet had gone through him, "I—I beg your pardon; but I really fancied for the moment I was quarrelling with some of Dove's nonsense—"

She smiled in such an easy way at the mistake, however, that he saw she put no importance upon it.

"I was going to say—how could stupid peo-

ple exist if they did not despise their superiors in wit, and intellect, and artistic perception? There is a man at my club, for instance, who is intellectually, as he is physically, a head and shoulders taller than any of his brother members. What reputation has he? Simply, that of being 'an amusing young fellow, but—but very shallow, don't you know.' The empty-headed idiots of the smoking-room sit and laugh at his keen humor, and delicate irony, and witty stories; and rather patronize and pity him in that he is weak enough to be amusing. A dull man always finds his refuge in calling a man of brighter parts than himself 'shallow.' You should see this friend of mine when he goes down into the country to see his relations; how he is looked upon at the dinner-table as being only fit to make the women smile; and how some simpering fool of a squire, with nothing more brilliant in his library than a pair of hunting-boots, will grin compassionately to some other thick-headed farmer, as though it were a ludicrous thing to see a man make himself so like a woman in being witty and entertaining."

"And you think the women in these country-houses more intelligent and amusing than the men?"

"God help country-houses when the women are taken out of them!"

"What a large portion of my life have I wasted over this abominable Bradshaw," said Count Schönstein, coming up at that moment, and their conversation was for the present stopped.

But Will now recognized more firmly than ever the invisible barrier that was placed between her and the people among whom his life had been cast; and, perhaps, for Dove's sake, he was a little glad that he could never look upon this too charming young actress but as the inhabitant of another world. And sometimes, too, he involuntarily echoed Dove's exclamation, "You are too beautiful to be an actress!"

When, after a pleasant little supper-party in the Mayence hotel at which they stopped, they parted for the night, Will congratulated himself on the resolution he had taken in the morning. It had been such a pleasant day; and who was the worse for it? He was sick at heart when he thought the time would come in which he could no more enjoy the keen pleasure of sitting near this tender creature, of watching her pretty ways, and listening to her voice. The love he felt for her seemed to give him a right of property in her, and he thought of her going forever away from him as an irreparable and painful loss. There was a quick, anxious throbbing at his heart as he attempted to picture that last interview; for he had resolved that after their return to England, he would not permit himself to see her again. He thought of her going away from him without once knowing of that subtle personal link which seemed to unite them in a secret friendship. She would be quite unconscious of the pain of that parting; she might even think that he had yielded to the prejudices of

which she had spoken, and had become ashamed of her friendship.

"That, too, must be borne," he said, with a sigh. "I can not explain why I should cease to see her; and yet we must never meet again after we return to England. If it were not for Dove, I should look out for some appointment abroad, and so get an excuse; for it is hard to think that I must wound the self-respect of so gentle a creature by appearing to refuse her proffered friendship without a cause."

Then he sat down and wrote a long letter to Dove; and for the first time he felt a great constraint upon him in so doing. He was so anxious, too, that she should not notice the constraint, that he wrote in a more than usually affectionate strain; and strove to impress her with the necessity of their being married very soon.

"Once married," he said to himself, "I shall soon forget this unhappy business. In any case, we must all suffer more or less; and it is entirely owing to my carelessness in enjoying Miss Brunel's society without looking at what it might lead to. But how should a man of my years have anticipated such a thing? Have I not been intimate with as pretty and as accomplished women in all parts of the world, without ever dreaming of falling in love with them?"

But no, there was no woman so pretty and charming as *this* one, he reflected. No one at all. And so, counting up in his mind, like a miser counting his guineas, one by one, the few days he would yet have to spend in the torturing delight of being near to her, he got him to bed, and did *not* dream of St. Mary-Kirby.

The next day they reached Freiburg, and here the Count had a carriage awaiting them, with a couple of swarthy Schwarzwalders in his somewhat ostentatious livery.

"Now we are getting home," he said, with a bland laugh to Mrs. Christmas; "and you must have a very long rest after so much travelling. We shall see what the air of Schönstein will do for you, and a little of the Schönstein wine—eh, eh?"

Their entrance to the Black Forest was inauspicious. It was toward the afternoon before they left Freiburg; and the air was oppressively hot and sultry. Just as they were approaching the Höllenthal—the Valley of Hell—a strange noise attracted Will's attention; and, looking over the back of the open carriage, he saw behind them a great red cloud, that entirely shut out the landscape. Two minutes afterward a sudden gust of wind smote them with the violence of a tornado; they were enveloped in a dense lurid pall of sand; and before they could cover over the carriage great drops of rain began to fall. Then the far-off rumbling of thunder, and an occasional gleam of reflected lightning, told what was coming.

The Count looked much alarmed.

"The Höllenthal is a fearful place," said he to the ladies: "overhanging rocks, dark as pitch, precipices, you know—and—and hadn't we better return to Freiburg? That is, if you

think you will be afraid. For myself, I'd rather go on to-night, and save a day."

"Don't think of turning on our account," said Annie Brunel. "Mrs. Christmas and I have been together in a good many storms."

So they went on, and entered that gloomy gorge, which is here the gateway into the Black Forest. They had just got themselves closed in by the mighty masses of rock, when the storm thoroughly broke over their heads. It was now quite dark, and the thin white shafts of lightning shot down through the ravine, lighting up the fantastic and rugged sides of the pass with a sudden sharpness. Then the thunder crackled overhead, and was re-echoed in hollow rumbles, as if they were in a cavern with huge waves beating outside; and the rain fell in torrents, hissing on the road, and swelling the rapid stream that foamed and dashed down its rocky channel by their side. Every flash whitened the four faces inside the carriage with a spectral glare; and sometimes they got a passing glance down the precipice, by the side of which the road wound, or up among the overhanging blocks and crags of the mountains.

Mrs. Christmas had been in many a thunder-storm, but never in the Höllenthal; and the little woman was terrified out of her life. At every rattling report of the thunder she squeezed Miss Brunel's hand the more tightly, and muttered another sentence of an incoherent prayer.

"Unless you want to kill your horses, Count," said Will, "you'll stop at the first inn we come to; that is about a mile farther on. I can tell by the sound of the wheels that the horses are dragging them through the mud and ruts by main force; and up this steep ascent that won't last long."

"Think of poor Mary and Hermann," said Annie Brunel. "Where must they be?"

"I'll answer for Hermann coming on to-night if he's alive," said the Count. "And I hope that he and the luggage and Mary won't be found in the morning down in that tremendous hole where the stream is. Bless my life, did any mortal ever see such a place, and such a night! What a flash that was!"

It was about midnight when they reached the Stern inn; and very much astonished were the simple people, when they were woke up, to find that a party of visitors had ventured to come through the Hell Valley on such a night.

"And the hired carriage from Freiburg, Herr Graf," said the chief domestic of the little hostelry; "it won't come up the valley before the morning."

"What does the fool say?" the Count inquired of Will.

"He says that the trap with the luggage won't come up to-night."

"Bah!" said the Count, grandly. "Sie wissen nicht dasz mein Förster kommt; und er kommt durch zwanzig — durch zwanzig — zwanzig — damme, get some supper, and mind your own business."

"Yes, eef you please, my lord," said the man, who knew a little English.

The Count was right. Hermann did turn up, and Mary, and the luggage. But the hired vehicle had been a badly-fitting affair, and the rain had got in so copiously that Mary was discovered sitting with Hermann's coat wrapped round her, while the tall keeper had submitted to be drenched with the inevitable good-humor of six-feet-two. Some of the luggage also was wet; but it was carried into the great warm kitchen, and turned out and examined.

At supper, the Count, who was inclined to be merry, drank a good quantity of Affenthaler, and congratulated Mrs. Christmas on her heroic fortitude. Annie Brunel was quiet and pleasant as usual—a trifle grave, perhaps, after that passage through the Höllenthal. Will was at once so happy and so miserable—so glad to be sitting near the young Italian-looking girl, so haunted by the dread of having to separate from her in a short week or two—that he almost wished the storm had hurled the vehicle down into the bed of the stream, and that there he and Schön-Röhrtraut might have been found dead together in the gray morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

SCHÖNSTEIN.

"WELCOME to Schönstein!" cried the Count gayly, as a turn in the road brought them in sight of a little hamlet, a small church, and beyond these—somewhat back from the village—an immense white house with green sun-shades over the windows.

"Friend Anerley," said the Count to himself, "if you ever had a thought of paying your addresses to the lady opposite you, your case is rather hopeless *now*!"

Annie Brunel looked forward through the ruddy mist that the sunset was pouring over the picture before them, and thought that it was very beautiful indeed. She paid little attention to the gaunt white house. But this little village, set in a clearing of the great forest—its brown wooden houses, with their heavy projecting eaves and numerous windows; the small white church, with a large sun-dial painted in black on the gable; the long, sloping hill behind, covered, away even to the horizon, with the black-green pines of the Schwarzwald—all these things, steeped in the crimson glow of the western light, were indeed most charming and picturesque.

"Why do they project the roofs so much?" she said, looking especially at the inn of the little hamlet they were approaching. "I thought these splendid old houses only existed in Swiss lithographs."

"For the snow," said the Count, grandly, as if the intensity of the Black Forest winters belonged to him. "You should see a regular snow-storm in this country, with half the houses buried, the mail-coaches turned into sledges—

why, every man who keeps a carriage here must keep it in duplicate—a wheel-carriage for the summer, a sledge for the winter."

With which they drove through the village. Hans Halm, the sturdy innkeeper, was at the door of that palace in brown wood which he called his house; and to Hermann's hurried—"Wie geht's? Wie geht's, Halm?" he returned a joyous "danke schön, Hermann."

"But where is Grete?" said Hermann, in a bewildered way, to the English Mary who sat beside him in the second carriage. "She not here? She know I come; she is not at the door of the inn—"

"Who is Grete?" said Mary, who had made great friends with the big keeper in England.

"Why, Grete is—you know, Grete."

At that moment Margarethe Halm was in the courtyard of the Count's house, whither she had stolen away from her father's house, with her heart beating, and her ears listening for the sound of the carriage wheels. A young, swarthy, handsome girl, with an innocent, dumb, animal-like fondness and honesty in her big, soft black eyes, she stood there in her very best clothes—her Sunday head-dress of black velvet and gold beads; her short petticoats and dress; her elaborately embroidered boddiece; her puffed white sleeves, coming down to the elbow, and there exposing her round, fat, sunburned arms. She it was with whom Hermann had sung, on the night before he left for England, the old ballad in which the wanderer bids farewell to his native vale; and ever since, when she heard the pitiful words;

"Musz aus dem Thal jezt scheiden,
Wo alles Lust und Klang;
Das ist mein herbstes Leiden
Mein letzter Gang.
Dich, mein stilles Thal, grüsz ich tausend Mal!
Das ist mein herbstes Leiden
Mein letzter Gang!"

the big black eyes were wont to overflow, and her round brown cheeks grew wet with tears. She was always very silent, this Grete Halm, and you might have thought her dull; but she was so extraordinarily sensitive to emotional impressions, and there was such a mute, appealing look in her eyes for kindness and affection, that half the young men in the neighborhood would have given their ears to be permitted to walk about with Grete, and go to church with her, and sing with her in the evening. There was the young schoolmaster, for example—every body knew how he came to have that ugly mark on his nose the last time he came home from Göttingen, to undertake the tuition of his neighbors' children. It was at a beer-drinking bout, and a few got tipsy; and one especially, Friedrich Schefer, disliking young Gersbach, came round to him, and said:

"I see you have Margarethe Halm written on one of your books. If that is the name of your sweetheart, my friend Seidl says she is a rogue, and not to be trusted."

"I challenge you," says Gersbach, calmly, but blinking fiercely through his spectacles.

"Further, muthiger Herr Gersbach, my friend Seidl says, your Margarethe Halm has half a dozen sweethearts, and that you give her money to buy presents for them."

"You are a liar, Friedrich Schefer!" shouts Gersbach, starting to his feet; "and I challenge you, *ohne, ohne.*"*

So the next morning the meeting took place; and the unfortunate Gersbach, who had had little practice, and was slow of eye, suddenly received a blow which divided the under part of his nose from the upper. The wound was sewn up again on the spot; but when Gersbach came home he looked a hideous spectacle, and though he never spoke of it, it leaked out that the wound had been got in fighting about Margarethe Halm. Gersbach was a great friend of Hans Halm's, and spent every evening in the inn chatting with the keepers, or reading Greek, and drinking white wine and water; but Grete showed him no particular favor, and he seemed rather sad.

"Ach, Gott," said Margarethe to herself, as she stood in the stone courtyard; "if they should not come—and if my father should see me—"

The next moment she caught sight of the two carriages coming along through the village; and her heart waxed a little faint as she saw that Hermann was sitting with a rosy young English girl by his side.

"He never wrote to me any thing about her," she thought, in those scrawled letters which always ended, '*Get'ien mir, deuke ran; und mit herzlichsten Grüssen,*' etc., etc.

It seemed part of the tall head-forester's pride that he would not permit himself to show any joyful surprise on finding that Grete was in the courtyard. On the contrary, with a curt, "*'n Abend, Grete,*" he passed her, and busied himself in seeing that the Count and his guests were being properly attended to by the servants, and that the luggage was being straightway carried in.

Margarethe Halm, with her heart beating worse than ever, came timidly forward, then hung about a little, and at last ventured to say, with a little quivering of the mouth:

"Thou hast never even shaken hands with me, Hermann."

"But thou seest that I am busy, Grete, and—*Donnerwetter*, idiot, look what you do with the lady's box!—and thou shouldst not have come at such a time, when the Herr Graf and his visitors have just arrived, and expect—"

He proceeded to give some more orders; for the head-forester was an important man in Schönstein, and looked upon the Count's domestics as he looked upon his own keepers. But happening to turn, he caught a glimpse of what suddenly smote down his gruff pride—Margarethe Halm was standing by, with her soft black eyes brimming over with tears. Of course his

stalwart arms were round her shoulders in a moment, and he was talking pettingly and caressingly to her, as if she were an infant, with ever so many *du's* and *klein's* and *chen's*.

The Count's big mansion, though it looked like a whitewashed cotton-factory outside, was inside very prettily furnished; and the long, low-roofed rooms, with their polished wooden floors and gayly-decorated walls, were very cool and pleasant. There was little garden about the house; the ground behind was laid out in formal walks between avenues of acacias and limes; there was a little pond, with a plaster boy in the centre, who spouted a thin jet of water through a pipe; and there was, at the farther end of the trees, an artificial ruin, which the previous proprietor had failed to complete when the Count took possession of the place.

"How lovely the village looks in that red light!" said Annie Brunel, as they all went out on the balcony of the room in which dinner had been laid for them.

"But the glory of Schönstein," said the Count, slapping Will on the shoulder—"I say, the glory of Schönstein, my boy, lies in those miles and miles of trees—the deer, my lad, the deer! Ah, Miss Brunel, when I see you take a gun upon your shoulder, and march into the forest with us—like Diana, you know—"

He looked at her with the admiring smile of an elderly Adonis. Had he not the right, now that she had seen his splendor and his wealth? Could he doubt any longer about his chance of winning that white little hand?

"You are too kind, Count," she said, laughingly. "Lady Jane will tell you that the very name of Diana has been always hateful to me."

"It's Diana Vernon she means," said Mrs. Christmas, with a pretty little laugh; "that she used to play before she became a grand lady. And play it she did, Count, take my word for it, as well as ever you could think of; and as for me, I never *could* understand how she so hated the part, which is a very good part for a young miss that can sing. I declare the dialogue is quite beautiful."

Here she gave, with great feeling and correct, impassioned emphasis, some passages in which the Diana and Francis of that ridiculous drama talk bombastic sentiment to each other, causing Miss Brunel to laugh until the tears ran down her cheeks.

"You may laugh as you like, Miss Annie, but it's a beautiful piece; and how many years is it since you played it for my benefit?"

"You're making me quite old, Lady Jane," protested the young actress.

"People have only to look at you, my dear," continued the bright little old woman, "and they won't make a mistake. That was the very last time I went on the stage, Count; and do you know what I played?—why, 'Miami' in the 'Green Bushes.' And Miss Annie, here, just to please me, consented to play 'Nelly O'Neil,' and will you believe me, Mr. Anerley, I stood in the wings and cried—me, an old woman, who

*The extended phrase is "*Ich fordere Ihn' auf, ohne Mützen, ohne Secundanten.*"—"I challenge you, without either masks or seconds." Such a challenge being given (and it is only given in cases of extreme provocation), the duellists fight without cessation until one of them is *hors de combat*.

had heard it all a thousand times—when she began to sing the ‘Green Bushes.’ Have you heard it, Count—don’t you know the words of it?

“‘As I was a-walking one morning in May,
To hear the birds singing, and see lamkins play,
I espied a young damsel, so sweetly sung she,
Down by the Green Bushes, where she chanced to meet me.’”

There was Polly Hastings—she played ‘Geraldine’ then—came to me after that last night, and said, solemnly, that she would give herself over to the devil if he would only make her able to sing the ballad as Miss Annie sung it that night. The people in the pit—”

“Mrs. Christmas will go on romancing all the evening, Mr. Arnerley, if you don’t stop her,” said Miss Brunel.

“And poor Tom Mulloney—he played ‘Wild Murtogh’ for me—do you remember, Miss Annie, that morning at rehearsal when they came and told him that his wife and the little boy were drowned? He didn’t speak a word—not a word; he only shook a little, and was like to fall; then he walked out, and he was never on the boards of a theatre again. He took to drinking as if he was mad; and he was put in an asylum at last; and they say he used to sing all his old songs at the amateur concerts in the place, you know, better nor ever he had sung them in the theatre—that was ‘The Dance on the Flure,’ and ‘The Jug o’ Punch,’ and ‘Savourneen Deelish,’ and ‘The Coulin’—”

“The Coulin’!” said Will, with a sort of chill at the heart; he had forgotten all about Dove, and St. Mary-Kirby; and the remembrance of them, at that moment, seemed to reproach him somehow.

“Do you know the ‘Coulin’?” asked Miss Brunel, wondering at his sudden gravity.

“Yes,” said he, with an affectation of carelessness. “It is one of Dove’s favorite airs. But she won’t accept the modern words as representing the song; she will have it that the melody describes the parting of two friends—”

“Come, then,” said the Count, briskly, “dinner is ready. Miss Brunel, you shall play us the—the what, did you say?—to-morrow, after the man has come from Donaueschingen to tune the piano. Not a bad piano, either, as you’ll see; and now I don’t grudge having bought it along with the rest of the furniture, when I find that *you* will charm us with an occasional song. Four hundred florins, I think it was; but I don’t know.”

As they retired into the long dining-saloon, where a sufficiently good dinner was placed on the table, Hermann came out into the courtyard, surrounded by a lot of yelping little beagles, with short, stumpy legs, long ears, long noses, and sagacious eyes. Further, there was a huge brown mastiff, with long, lithe limbs, and tremendous jaws, at sight of which Grete shrank back, for the brute was the terror of the village.

“Go down, then, thou stupid dog, thou worthless fellow! seest thou not the young lady is

afraid? Ah, du guter Hund, du Rudolph, and so thou knowest me again? Come along, Grete, he won’t touch you; and we’ll go to see your father.”

“You won’t tell him I was waiting for you, Hermann?” said the girl, shyly.

Hans Halm stood at the door of his *châlet*-looking hostelry, in a thin white coat and a broad straw hat, with a complacent, benevolent smile on his stout visage and shrewd blue eyes. Sometimes he looked up and down the road, wondering what had become of Grete, who, Frau Halm being dead, had taken her mother’s place in the management of the inn. Perhaps Hans suspected where his tender-hearted, black-eyed daughter had gone; at least, he was in no wise surprised to see her coming back with Hermann, Rudolph joyously barking by their side. The two men shook hands heartily, and kissed each other; for had they not, some years before, pledged themselves solemnly to call each other “du” and sworn eternal friendship, and drunk a prodigious quantity of Affenthaler over that ceremony?

“Gretchen, get you in-doors; the house is quite full, and you can’t expect your grandmother to do every thing.”

Hermann looked into the passage. On the pegs along the wall were hung a number of guns—nearly all of them double-barrelled breech-loaders, with white barrels, and broad green straps for the slinging of them over the shoulder.

“My men are within, *nicht wahr?*” he said.

“Listen, and you will hear,” said Hans Halm.

From the door by which Grete had disappeared, there issued a faint murmur of voices and a strong odor of tobacco-smoke. Hermann went forward and opened this door, meeting there a picture with which he was quite familiar, but which it is quite impossible to describe. The chief room of the inn, monopolizing all the ground-floor, and lighted by ten or twelve small windows, was almost filled with a cloud of pale-blue smoke, in which picturesque groups of men were seen seated round the long, narrow tables. Brown-faced, bearded men, they wore the foresters’ dress of green and gray, with a tall beaver hat in which were stuck some capercaillie feathers, with a large cartridge-pouch of roe-skin slung over their shoulder by a green strap, with a horn slung round their neck by means of a twisted green cord with tattered tassels, and with a long killing-knife lying on the table before them, with which they from time to time cut a lump off the brown loaf. All round the low-roofed room, forming a sort of cornice, ran a row of deer’s horns, tastefully mounted, each marked with the date on which the animal had been shot. These were for the most part the product of Hans Halm’s personal skill; though the finest pair had been presented to him by Hermann. Besides the under-keepers, there were one or two villagers, and in a corner sat young Gersbach, his spectacles firmly fixed on the book before him, except when Margarethe Halm happened to pass before him, as she brought in fresh chopins

of white wine to the swarthy, sinewy, picturesque foresters.

Of course Hermann's entrance was the signal for a general uproar, all the keepers starting from the benches and crowding round him to bid him welcome. At last he managed to get clear of them, and then he sat down on one of the benches.

"Listen, friends!" he said, in a loud voice, bringing down his hand with a bang on the table. There was instant silence.

"The Herr Graf and his friend go shooting to-morrow morning. Every man will be here by four o'clock—four o'clock, do you understand? In placing the guns, you will take care that the Herr Graf, and the other Engländer, have the *Haupt-platz** alternately. Four o'clock, every one of you, remember. And, now in God's name, Hans Halm, let us have some of your white wine that I haven't tasted for many a day!"

There was a new life in the big forester, now that he had sniffed the resinous odor of his native woods, and was once more among his own people. He languished in the dull solitude of Kent; here he knew his business, he was respected of men, and he speedily showed that there was none of the old swing and vigor gone out of him.

He had scarcely spoken of the wine, when Grete came up with it in a tall white measure, a modest and pleased smile on her face.

"She does not smile like that to the young Mr. Schoolmaster," whispered one keeper to another. "Our Gretchen has her favorites."

"God give her courage if she marries Hermann," said the other. "He will drive her as we drive the roe."

"Nonsense! Hermann Löwe is an infant with women. You should see how his sister-in-law in Donaueschingen manages him."

At this moment the schoolmaster, whom nobody had noticed, came forward and said to his rival:

"How do you find yourself, Hermann Löwe?"

"Ah, right well, Herr Schulmeister," replied the other, giving him a hearty grasp of the hand. "And I'll tell you what I've got for you in my box. I looked for all the beetles, and creeping things, and butterflies I could in England, and all the strange ones I have brought for you, with a fine big pin run through their body."

"You are very kind, Hermann Löwe."

"No, I'm not. You did a good turn to my sister-in-law's child when he was nearly dead with eating those berries—that's all. And do you still read as much, and gather beetles yourself? Now, look here—I must have all the lads in the neighborhood to drive for me in the morning, and they'll have to work hard, for the Herr Graf is not a patient man, and he gets angry if there are not plenty of bucks; and so, if the boys

* The *Haupt-platz* is the point at which the deer are most likely to break cover, and therefore the best position for the sportsman. There are generally one or two of these good places, which are invariably given, as a compliment, to strangers.

are too tired to go to the evening school—you understand?"

Gersbach nodded.

"And the Herr Graf will be pleased if you come with us yourself, Gersbach," added Hermann.

Later in the evening the Count's party came round to visit the inn. By this time Hermann had gone; but there still remained a few of the keepers, who, on seeing the Count, politely rose from their seats.

"Nein," said the Count, in a lordly way, "eh—ah sitzen sie, gute freundin—eh freunde—and wie sind Sie, Herr Halm und sein Tochter?"

Halm, with admirable gravity, replied to the Count as if his highness's manner and grammar had quite impressed the poor innkeeper.

"Very well indeed, Herr Graf; and Grete, she will be here this moment. I understand you are going to shoot to-morrow morning, Herr Graf; I hope you will have much sport."

"He says the deer are very plentiful," observed the Count, oracularly, to Annie Brunel. "So you really must come with us to-morrow and see our luck."

"Are these roe-deer's horns?" the young lady asked. "Pray ask him how he came to have so many. Did he shoot them all himself?"

The Count turned, with rather an uncomfortable expression, toward the innkeeper, and said (in German),

"The lady loves to know if—you have—every thing shot."

Halm looked aghast. Was the Count going to impeach him with having thinned the neighboring woods during the owner's absence? He immediately broke into a long explanation and description of all the drives they had had that season, and told how the deer were so plentiful that the people were complaining bitterly of having their fields and gardens eaten up, and so forth, and so forth. But the embarrassment of the Count's face only deepened, and still further deepened, until, in a querulous tone, he cried out:

"I say, Anerley, I think you'd better come and listen to what he says about the sport you're likely to get to-morrow, rather than waste time in showing Mrs. Christmas things she doesn't care about!"—this with a hot face and an excited air.

"If you listen, isn't that enough?" said Anerley.

"But, damme, I can't understand a word he says—he talks like an engine, and all in that horrid *patois*—Herr Halm, I comprehend; but, do you know, the lady loves to drink your white wine." (This in German.) "Some white wine, Herr Graf?"

"Yes. Not many. We wish to drink, and four glasses, you understand."

"It is so difficult," continued the Count, addressing Miss Brunel, "to get these people to understand German, if you don't speak their barbarous form of it. However, I have told him we all wished to taste the white wine they

drink here—not a bad wine, and remarkably cheap.”

“Let me introduce you, Miss Brunel,” said Will, “to Miss Grete Halm, who says she speaks French, and will be delighted to escort you to-morrow at any time you may wish to join us. Grete says she once shot a deer herself; but I suspect somebody else pulled the trigger while she held the gun.”

Gretchen came forward with a warm blush on her brown cheek; and then it was arranged (she speaking French fluently enough, but with a Schwarzwald accent) that she and Annie Brunel would seek out the shooting-party toward the forenoon of the following day.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COUNT DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.

In the dusk of the early morning the keepers, drivers, and dogs had assembled in the large room of Hans Halm's inn. Hermann was there too, with the great-jawed Rudolph; and Margarethe, with a shadowy reminiscence of recent dreams in her soft black eyes, stood quietly on one side, or brought some beer to this or that gruff forester, who had perhaps walked a dozen miles that morning to the place of rendezvous. The dogs lay under the chairs, the guns and deer-skin pouches of the men were on the table before them, by the side of their tall, feathered beavers; and if the whole scene did not look as if it had been cut out of an opera, it was because the picturesque trappings of the keepers had been sobered in color by the rain and sun of many years, and because there dwelt over the party an austere silence. The excitement of the day had not commenced.

When the Count and Will arrived at the place of meeting, a faint flush of rose-color was beginning to steal along the dark violet of the dawn; and as the whole party set out, in straggling twos and threes along the gray road, daylight began to show itself over the fields and the mist-covered woods.

Hermann, who led the way, was accompanied by a little old man with a prodigious black mustache, twinkling eyes, and comical gravity of face, who was captain over the drivers, and named Spiegelmann. The venerable Spiegelmann, with his tall hat, and slung horn, was a man of importance; and he had already, with much seriousness, pronounced his opinion on the direction of the wind, and on the necessity for beginning the driving some considerable distance farther on.

Then came Will Anerley, who had made friends with the young schoolmaster, Gersbach, and was very anxious to know how life was to be made tolerable if one lived at Schönstein all the year round. Indeed, Anerley's having travelled so much, and among so many different people, combined with a certain natural breadth of sympathy, gave him a peculiar interest in trying to im-

agine himself in the position of almost every man whom he met. How did those men regard the rest of the world? What had they to look forward to? What was their immediate aim—their immediate pleasure? Anerley would take as much interest in the affairs of an applewoman, and talk as gravely and freely to her about them, as he would in the more ambitious projects of an artist or a man of letters. The gratifying of this merely intellectual curiosity was a constant habit and source of satisfaction to him; and while it offended some people by the frankness of speech, and charmed others by the immediate generosity and self-denial which were its natural results, it promised to leave him, sooner or later, in the attitude of negative criticism and social isolation which his father exhibited. Fortunately he had inherited from his mother a certain warmth of heart and impulse which corrected his transmitted tendency to theorize: it was this side of his temperament which had brought upon him his present misfortune, while he had been engaged, out of pure curiosity, in studying Annie Brunel's character, and endeavoring to enter into her views of the people and things around her. In fact, the pursuit of which I speak, though extremely enticing and pleasant, should never be attempted by an unmarried man who has not passed his fortieth year.

In the present case the young Herr Schulmeister took an instant liking for the grave, cheerful, plain-spoken man beside him, who seemed to concern himself about other people, and was so ready with excuses for them.

“I should not take you to be an Englishman,” said Gersbach.

“Why?”

“You have none of the English character. Count Schönstein is an Englishman—a typical Englishman—conceited, bigoted in his own opinions, generous when it is permitted to him to be ostentatious, dull and stupid, and jealous of people who are not so—”

“My friend,” said Will, “why didn't you leave your dolls behind you in the nursery? Or is this typical Englishman one of your university puppets? You know there is no such thing as a typical Englishman, or typical Frenchman, or typical German; and I have almost come to believe that there is no such thing as national character. The most reckless prodigals I have met have been Scotchmen; the keenest businessmen I have met have been Irishmen; the dull-est and most melancholy, Frenchmen—”

“And the Germans?” asked Gersbach, with a laugh.

“The Germans are like any body else, so far as disposition goes, although they happen to be educationally and intellectually a little ahead of other nations. And as for the poor Graf, I don't think you, for example, would make half as good a man as he is if you were in his position.”

“Perhaps not; but why?”

“I can't explain it to you in German; but

doctrinairism is not the first requisite in a landlord; and if you were the Graf, you would be for coercing the people under you and about you into being logical, and you would withdraw yourself from people who opposed you, and you would gradually weaken your influence and destroy your chances of doing good. Why are our Tory country gentlemen always better liked by the people than the Radical proprietors? Why are Tories, as a rule, pleasanter companions than Radicals? I am a Radical; but I always prefer dining with a Tory."

"Is the Count a Tory?" asked the Schulmeister.

"Yes. Men who have been in business and earned, or gained, a lot of money, almost invariably become fierce Tories. It is their first passport to respectability; and there is no step one can take so cheaply as that of changing one's political theories."

"What a singular social life you have in England!" cried Gersbach, blinking with a curious sort of humor behind his big spectacles. "There is the demi-monde, for example. Why you talk of that, and your writers speak of it, as if there was an acknowledged rivalry openly carried on between the members of it and your married women."

"But our married women," said Will, "are going to form a trades-union among themselves in order to crush that institution."

At which Franz Gersbach looked puzzled: these English were capable of trying any mad expedient; and somehow their devices always worked well, except in such matters as popular education, military efficiency, music, scholarship, and so forth. As for a trades-union of any kind, it was sure to flourish in England.

They had now reached the edge of the forest, and here Hermann called the party around him, and gave his orders in a loud, peremptory tone, which had the effect of considerably frightening his master; the Count hoped that he would do nothing inaccurate.

"You, Herr Schulmeister, will accompany the drivers, and Spiegelmann will give you one of the return-posts. Falz, you will go down to the new-cut road, Greof on your right, Bagel farther along. Spiegelmann will sound his horn when you are all posted, and the second horn when the drive commences. Forward, then, in God's name, all of us!"

And away trooped the lads under the surveillance of the venerable Spiegelmann, who had a couple of brace of leashed beagles pulling and straining and whining to get free into the brushwood. Hermann, Will, and the Count at once dived into the twilight of the tall pines, that almost shut out the red flames of the morning over their peaks. The soft, succulent yellow moss was heavy with dew, and so were the ferns and the stoneberry bushes. A dense carpet of this low brushwood deadened the sound of their progress; and they advanced, silent as phantoms, into the dim recesses of the wood. Here and there occurred an opening or clearance, with a

few felled trees lying about; then they struggled through a wilderness of younger fir and oak, and finally came into a tract of the forest where nothing was to be seen as far as the eye could reach but innumerable tall trunks, coated with the yellow and gray lichens of many years, branchless almost to their summit, and rising from a level plain of damp green moss. There was not even the sound of a bird, or of a falling leaf, to break the intense silence of the place; nor was there the shadow of any living thing to be seen down those long, narrow avenues between the closely-growing stems of the trees.

"Count Schönstein," said Will, in a whisper, as they drew near the Haupt-platz, "what gun is that you have with you?"

"My central-fire."

"Carries far?"

"I should think so. Shoots hard and close as a rifle."

"Will it kill at sixty yards?"

"It might."

"Hermann," said Will, turning to the head-keeper, "I insist on being posted eighty yards distant from the Count."

"You think that is a joke," said the Count, peevishly.

"I don't think it a joke at all," said Will. "Breech-loaders have a wonderful faculty for going off when nobody expects them; and though you may explain the thing satisfactorily afterward, that won't remove a few buck-shot out of your leg."

"I am not in the habit of letting my gun go off accidentally," said the Count, grandly. "Indeed, I flatter myself that few men better understand the use of—"

"The Haupt-platz, Herr," said Hermann unceremoniously breaking in upon his master. "The Herr Graf will be stationed farther down this path; you must not shoot in that direction. You may shoot in front as the deer come to you, or after them, when they have passed; not along this line, only."

"Danke schön, Hermann, and tell the same thing to the Count."

He now found himself opposite a tall tree, which had a cross in red paint traced upon the trunk. The Count and Hermann passed on, and when the three were posted, each held out his arm and signalled that he understood his immediate neighbor's position, and would remember it.

Scarcely had they done so when a long and loud *tantara!* from Spiegelmann's horn told them that the drivers were ready. A faint echo now came from the other side of the strip of forest, showing that there the keepers were posted; and finally a return-blast from Hermann's horn proclaimed that all were waiting.

Once more a brilliant trill from Spiegelmann—this time an audacious and elaborate effort, full of noisy anticipation—came through the wood; and then were heard the faint and far-off sounds of yelping dogs, and shouting men, and sticks being beaten against the stumps of the

trees. The drive had commenced. Count Schönstein began to tremble; his heart went faster and faster, as his excited brain peopled all the dim vistas of the trees with living forms. He could scarcely breathe, with absolute fear. Again and again he looked at his triggers, and the hammers, and the little spikes of brass which he hoped would strike death into the ribs of some splendid buck. He began to assure himself that he *could not* tell a buck from a doe if the animal ran quickly; that he *must* shoot at once, and trust to Providence keeping the tender feminine members of the herd out of the way. Indeed, he had already framed an excuse for having shot a doe, and he was busily picturing his assumed regret, and his inner delight at being able to shoot any thing, when—

By this time a dead silence had intervened. The first joyous yelping of the dogs had quite died down; and now the broad-footed, stumpled, big-headed little animals were wiring themselves through the brushwood, and jumping over the soft moss, with an occasional toss of their long ears or a slight whine. The only sound to be heard was the occasional rattling of sticks by the beaters, accompanied by their peculiar guttural cry.

Suddenly—and the whole empty space of the wood seemed to quiver for a moment with this instantaneous throb of life—Will caught a glimpse of a light shimmer of brown away at the end of one of the long avenues. For a moment the apparition was lost; when it re-appeared, it was evident that the deer was bearing down upon Count Schönstein's position. The next second, a fine, lithe, thin-limbed, supple and handsome buck came along in a light, easy canter into the gray light of the opener space. He had no thought of danger before him; he only thought of that behind; and for a brief space he stood right in front of the Count, apparently listening intently for the strange sounds from which he fled.

In despair, and rage, and amazement, Will saw him pause there, out of the range of *his* shot, and yet without an effort being made to secure the fine pair of horns which graced the animal's head. Will now saw that the Count's gun was levelled, and that he was apparently pulling at the trigger, but no puff of smoke came out of the barrel. Almost at the same moment the deer must have seen the Count; for all at once he shrank back on his limbs, as if he had been struck, shivered lightly through his entire frame, and then, with a sudden leap, he was off and away out of sight, in the direction of Hermann!

In that brief moment of time the Count had taken down his gun, looked at the hammers, found they were on half-cock, cocked them, and put up his gun again; and then, as the deer was just vanishing, bang! bang! went both the barrels. Of course the buck was quite untouched; but the next moment Will heard the sharp crack of a gun in the neighborhood of Hermann's post, and he knew what *that* meant.

Even at that distance he could bear the Count

breathing out incomprehensible curses at his own stupidity, as he put another couple of cartridges into the barrels. Doubtless, in his excitement, he had been trying so often whether the hammers were on full cock—pulling at them, letting them down, and so forth—that accidentally they remained at half-cock, and so spoiled for him the easiest shot he was likely to get that day.

The silence which had been broken by the report of the guns now fell again over the forest. The sun came out, too; and soon there were straggling lanes of gold running down into the blue twilight of the distance; while the heat seemed to have suddenly awakened a drowsy humming of insect life. Now and then a brightly-plumaged jay would flash through the trees, screaming hoarsely; and then again the same dead, hot stillness prevailed. It was in this perfect silence that a living thing stole out of some short bushes, and softly made its way over the golden and green moss until it caught sight of Will. Then it cocked up its head and calmly regarded him with a cold, glassy, curious stare. The moment it lifted its head he saw that it was a fox, not reddish-brown, but blackish-gray, with extraordinarily bright eyes; and as they had been specially invited to shoot foxes—which are of no use for hunting purposes, and do much damage, in the Black Forest—he instinctively put up his gun. As instinctively, he put it down again.

"My old prejudices are too strong," he said; wherewith he contented himself with lifting a lump of dried wood and hurling it at the small animal, which now slunk away in another direction.

Then burst out the joyous howl of the beagles—here and there, as if every one of them had started his own particular game; the yelping bark rising at times sharp and clear as if in the immediate neighborhood, at other times fading away into the distance. The fun had commenced. First there came trotting along a long-necked, thin-legged doe, with a little fawn by her side; and these, catching sight of Will, made a sharp turn to the right and bore down upon the Count. The latter, either too frightened or too savage to care for distinctions of sex or age, again blazed both barrels into the air, with what effect Will was too much occupied to see.

For at the same moment there came down the line, transversely, crossing in front of the Count, a fine buck which Hermann had taken a long shot at and missed. The deer was going at full speed, careless of any thing in front, his whole energy bent on speeding from the danger behind, and every thew and muscle of his body straining its utmost. As he passed, Will fired his right barrel into the flashing streak of brown—not a hair was touched! The next moment the buck, seeing that no further enemy stood in front, wheeled round and made off to cross the yath on which Will stood, at some distance farther down. Just as the shoulder of the animal appeared before the lane of trees, the other barrel was sent after him; there was a shrill scream,

the buck leaped a dozen feet into the air and fell, without a parting groan in him, head-foremost on the soft moss.

"There is one pair of horns, at least, for Miss Brunel," thought Will, hastily pushing in two more cartridges.

The Count had certainly plenty of good fortune, so far as the deer were concerned. One particularly handsome buck which had been running straight at him, without seeing him, he received with a hurriedly-aimed shot which did no damage. The animal, however, got such a fright that it turned and galloped right back and through the ring of the beaters, escaping a parting shot which old Spiegelmann aimed at him. Here and there a shot had been heard round the sides of the drive; but as yet no one knew what the other had done. In a few minutes, however, the dogs and then the boys began to show themselves, approaching through the trees. That particular drive was over.

Will hastened up to the Count.

"What have you shot?"

"Nothing."

The Count looked very much vexed; and Will attributed it, of course, to his having missed so many shots.

"Why didn't you shoot sooner at the deer that came up and looked at you?"

"Why?" re-echoed the Count, with a savage laugh. "Why? Because these — barrels were both on half-cock, and I pulled like to break my fingers over the — things. What did you shoot?"

"I believe I've left a buck lying down there."

"Why don't you go and look after him, and get somebody to carry him home, instead of waiting here?"

The Count was evidently very uncomfortable. He bit his lip, he worked with the trigger of his gun; and finally he walked abruptly away from Will, and addressed, in a whisper, the first of the boys who came up.

"Kommen Sie hier."

The boy stared in amazement at being called "Sie—" Of course he dared not think that the Count was joking.

"Ich habe geschossen—wissen Sie—?"

"Ja, Herr," said the boy, vaguely, though he did not understand what the Count meant.

"Ein kleines—ein gar kleines—damm it, look here!"

He caught the boy by the shoulder, as if he meant to kick him, and dragged him a few yards farther on, and pointed to the ground. The boy opened his eyes: if he had seen the corpse of his first cousin lying there, he could not have been more astonished.

"Sie sehen es," remarked the Count, hurriedly, with a fine red flush burning in his stout face.

"Ja, Herr."

There lay there a tiny, soft, pretty little animal, scarcely bigger than a King Charles' spaniel, with a glossy light-brown coat, and large meek eyes, now glazed and dull. Blood was

trickling from the little thing's mouth, and also from its shoulder: the fact being that the Count, on seeing the doe and her fawn coming up, had fired both his barrels at them on chance, and had managed to destroy the helpless youngling.

If you had told the Count then that before evening every man, woman, and child would have heard of what he had done, that the keepers would be sneering at him and the neighbors laughing at him, he would probably have put another cartridge into his gun and shot himself (if he were able) on the spot. His present anxiety was to get this little lad to take away the fawn under his blouse and bury it somewhere; but all he could do failed to impress the incorrigible young Schwarzwaldler with his meaning.

"Verstehen Sie mir nicht?"

"Ja, Herr."

It was always, "Ja, Herr;" and here were the people coming up. Fortunately, Hermann, having sent a long blast of his horn to recall any straggling beater or keeper, had walked down to the place where Will's slain buck was lying, accompanied by the rest of the keepers, who, as they came up, gravely shook hands with Will, according to custom, and wished him many more such shots. Then Spiegelmann, selecting a peculiarly-shaped branch of young fir, stuck it into Will's hat; by which all and sundry—particularly they of the village—as the shooting-party returned at night, might know that he had brought down a buck.

At this moment two of the lads dragged up the deer which Hermann had shot; and one of the keepers, with his long killing-knife in hand, proceeded to disembowel the animals, previous to their being carried home. The rest of the party seated themselves on the driest spot they could find, and somebody produced a couple of chopins of white wine, which were forthwith handed round.

But what of the Count? They had all been so eager to compliment Will on his good fortune, that no one had noticed the Graf's uneasy loitering about the fatal spot where his murdered victim lay.

Presently up came the boy.

"Hermann Löwe, the Herr Graf wants to see you. He has shot a little fawn; but he won't let me bring it."

Hermann rose up, with a flush of vexation over his face. He did not look at his companions, but he knew that they were smiling.

"Young idiot!" he said, when they were out of earshot. "Why didst thou come and say so before all the people?"

"The Herr Graf—"

"Der Teufel! Hast thou no head on thy shoulders?"

The Count was mortally frightened to meet Hermann. He did not know in what manner to conduct himself: whether he should carelessly joke away the matter, or overawe his forester by the grandeur of his demeanor.

"I see," said Hermann, when he came up;

"the Herr Graf will not believe me that there is always time to look—that when there is no time to look, one need not waste powder."

"Bah! stuff! nonsense! I tell you, when they are running like infernal hares, how am I to look at their size to a nicety?"

"The fawns don't run so quickly," said Hermann, respectfully, but firmly.

"Hermann Löwe," said the Count, hotly, "I suppose you're my servant."

"I have that honor, Herr Graf."

"Then you'll please to shut up, that's all, and get that wretched little animal out of the road. Not run quickly! D—n his impudence. I'll have to teach those German thieves some better manners."

With which, and many more muttered grumblings, the Count walked off, leaving Hermann to cover up the dead body of the fawn, and mark the place, so that it could be afterward taken away and securely buried.

When the Count came up to the rest of the party, he was smiling urbanely.

"Stolen a march upon me, eh?" he said to Will. "On my own ground, too. 'Gad, I'll show you something before we've done. I hadn't the ghost of a chance either time I shot; and it was lucky I missed the second time, because I saw immediately afterward that it was a doe."

"She had a fawn with her, hadn't she?" said Will.

"Yes," replied the Count, with a sharp glance all round the circle of faces.

Hermann now came up, and chose two of the strongest lads to carry home the two deer. Each lad had one of the animals slung round his shoulders, while he grasped two of its thin legs in either hand, and allowed the neck, head, and horns of the buck to hang down in a picturesque fashion behind him. Will went privately up to one of the boys.

"You know Grete Halm?"

"Yes."

"When you go down to the village, tell Grete to ask the English lady to come back with you; because if she remains till mid-day, we may be gone too far from Schönstein. You understand?"

"Yes."

"And you may go up to the Herr Graf's house, and tell any one you may see to send up luncheon an hour earlier than was arranged. You understand?"

"Ja, Herr."

And so the two lads went on their way; and Hermann began to sketch out to his keepers the plan of the next drive.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE.

It was, however, mid-day before Grete Halm and Annie Brunel arrived; and as they entered the forest at the point where the shooting-party

was now stationed they found that the drive had already commenced. Will happening to be at the corner post, it devolved upon him to enjoin strict silence upon the new-comers; a command which Miss Brunel obeyed by sitting down on the trunk of a felled tree, and beginning to ask Will a series of questions about his morning's adventures.

They were now in a clearance in the forest some forty yards broad, and on the other side of this strip of open ground ran a long dense mass of brushwood, lying still and silent in the luminous quivering heat. Will, Grete, and Annie Brunel were in the shadow of a patch of young firs, and between them and the dense brushwood extended the forty yards of clearance, with the strong sunlight beating down on the crimson and golden moss, and on the yellow stumps of the felled trees. The air was hot and moist, filled with the pungent resinous odor of the pine—a languid, delicious scented atmosphere, which made one prone to day-dreaming or sleep.

Suddenly, without the rustle of a leaf, and long before any of the dogs had given tongue, there leaped out from the close brushwood into the open sunlight a fine young buck, with his head and horns high in air. The warm light fell on his ruddy, light-brown coat, and showed his shapely throat, his sinewy form, and tall thin legs, as he stood irresolute and afraid, sniffing the air with his black nostrils, and watching with his full, large eyes. He saw nothing, however, of the people before him in the shadow of the firs; and for several seconds he remained motionless, apparently the only living thing in the dead silence of the place. Then the bark of a dog was heard behind him; he cantered a few steps farther on, caught sight of the little party as he passed, and then, doubly nerved, was off like a bolt into the heart of the forest.

"But, really—" said Will.

"Now, don't make me angry with you," said Annie, releasing his right arm, which she had tightly held for three minutes. "I should never have forgiven you if you had shot that poor creature, who looked so timid and handsome—"

"I should have given him the chance of running."

"But you would have killed him. Didn't I see the two you sent home, and their pitiful glazed eyes?"

"Then you have come out to stop our shooting altogether, I suppose," said Will, with a laugh, though he was much more vexed than he chose to show.

But he had his revenge. He had scarcely spoken when a buck, followed by two does, came out of the brushwood some distance farther down, the buck springing lightly and buoyantly over the soft moss, the does running more warily in his wake. Before Annie Brunel could do any thing beyond utter a short cry, the contents of Will's right barrel had caught the buck on the shoulder. He rolled over, struggled to his feet again, and then, with a last effort, made a few stumbling

steps, and sank unseen among the ferns. Will turned, with a smile, to Miss Brunel. She had covered her face with her hands. Grete, on the other hand, was in a wonderful state of delight.

"You killed him, Herr, I know you did. I saw him fall; and how handsome he was—and his horns, too, they are large; how pleased you will be to have them! My father will get them mounted for you, if you like; and if you would have the deer's feet for pegs, that can be done. Oh, I wish the drive was over, that I might go to see him!"

The drive was very nearly over, for the dogs were heard in the immediate neighborhood—particularly the low, sonorous baying of Rudolph, who had escaped from the leash, and was tearing backward and forward through the wood, with foam-flakes lying along his glistening brown coat. But all at once the baying of Rudolph was turned into a terrific yell, subsiding into a howl; and at the same moment the report of a gun was heard at some distance farther along. Immediately afterward Will caught sight of a doe disappearing through the trees behind him, and from the way it ran he judged that it had a broken leg; while down in front of them came Rudolph, going at full speed, with his tail between his legs, and the front of his mouth covered with blood. The next thing seen was Count Schönstein, who came running to Will in a wonderful state of excitement.

"I've shot him!—I've shot him!" he cried, "but we must go after him!"

"Is it Rudolph you mean?" said Will.

"A buck—a splendid buck—"

"Well, don't point your gun in my face."

"It's on half-cock."

"It isn't; and I don't like the muzzle of a gun staring at me."

"Will that do?" cried the Count, in vexation, dropping the gun on the ferns.

"Do come and help me to catch him—"

"Catch a deer! Listen, Miss Brunel—"

But the Count was off in the direction the wounded doe had taken.

The beaters now made their appearance through the brushwood, and Hermann's horn soon brought the keepers to the rendezvous. Will explained to Hermann that the Graf had gone in pursuit of a doe with a broken leg.

"Has he Rudolph with him?"

"No; I believe he shot Rudolph at the same time that he broke the hind leg of the doe."

"Shot Rudolph!" said Hermann; and then he turned to the keepers. "Where is Rudolph? Who has seen Rudolph? Who allowed Rudolph to escape?"

The only answer he could get was from a messenger, who came up to say that luncheon had arrived, and wished to know where the Herr Graf wanted it placed. This messenger gave Hermann a graphic description of his having seen Rudolph flying in the direction of Schönstein in a state of utter demoralization. Wherewith Hermann sat himself down on the stump of a tree, and said, resignedly:

"Spiegelmann, take one of the dogs after the wounded doe, and send back the Herr Graf. As for you, Fritz, ask the lady where luncheon is to be placed."

By the time Count Schönstein and Spiegelmann returned, the latter carrying on his shoulder the doe that the Count had shot, luncheon had been laid out by the servants; and round the large white cloth were placed a series of travelling rugs and other appliances for smoothing down the roughnesses of fern, and stoneberry, and moss. The keepers, Hermann, and the young schoolmaster were seated some little distance off, in picturesque groups, surrounding the dead game, which consisted of two bucks, the Count's doe, a fox shot by Gersbach, and a hare shot by some one else. The men had also their luncheon with them—apples, brown bread, a piece of smoked ham, and a bottle or two of white wine. All the incidents of the drive had now to be recapitulated; and there ensued a perfect Babel of guttural Schwarzwald German.

The Count had ordered out a very nice luncheon indeed; and so pleased was he with his success in having shot something, that he called one of the boys and gave him two bottles of champagne, a drinking-cup, and a lump of ice to take over to the keepers. Indeed, he would have given Hermann and the schoolmaster an invitation to sit down at the white cloth, only he wished to postpone that explanation about Rudolph until Annie Brunel and Will were out of the way. As for Grete Halm, she equally dreaded the thought of sitting with the Count's party, and of having to go alone among the men and boys opposite; and it was only by much coaxing and ordering that she was made to sit down by Miss Brunel and submit to have the Count himself carve for her and offer her wine in a beautiful little silver cup.

"Süsse an den Süssen," said he, gallantly, as he poured out the champagne; and Grete's soft black eyes looked puzzled.

"Look at the boy in the red blouse," said Annie Brunel, "lying beside the two deer. I believe the Count has got the whole scene made up in imitation of a hunting-picture, and that the boy knows well enough how fine his brown face and red smock-frock are in the sunlight. Then see how that deer's head lies back, precisely as if it were in a lithograph; and the streaks of sunlight falling across the green dress of the keepers and the stretched-out dogs—and Hermann, there, cutting an apple with a dagger, his hair all matted with perspiration—the schoolmaster sitting on the trunk of the tree, looking vaguely at the fox before him—"

"Wondering," observed Will, "what sort of chemical change has occurred within the last half-hour, or why life should go out of an organism when lead goes in."

"That is a German picture, and here are we making a French picture—only that Grete is such a thorough Black Forester with her bodice, and white sleeves, and head-dress."

The Count was intensely flattered and pleased

by her admiration of the impromptu pictures. He had been striving hard to interest and amuse her—most of all had he tried to charm her with the delights which he held at his own command; and here were the very sunlight, and the colors of the forest, and the shape of deer's necks aiding him!

"You don't see the like of that in England, do you?" he said, with his mouth full of cold chicken. "I hope, Miss Brunel, you and Mrs. Christmas will make your stay with us as long as ever you can."

"I should be very glad," she said; "but I must see what Lady Jane says in a day or two—whether she finds herself getting better. If she should prefer the cooler air of mountain scenery, we may go on to Switzerland."

"But don't you dread the idea of travelling alone—looking after your own luggage, and what not?" asked the Count, with his mouth this time full of some other animal's tongue.

"It was not entirely on a pleasure excursion we came," she said, quietly.

"And then," said Will, "you can get plenty of cool mountain air in the Black Forest. You can go and live comfortably on the top of the Feldberg, about 5000 feet high, with a dozen mountains all round you over 4000 feet. In the mean time, don't trouble yourself with thoughts of change; but let me give you some of this jelly. You are very fond of sweets, I know."

"I am. You have been watching me."

He had been watching her too much, he thought. The intense curiosity with which he had regarded the singular change in the girl's nature so soon as she left the stage, with the study of her pretty, superficial carelessness, her frank, audacious manner, and her quaint, maternal, matter-of-fact attitude toward himself, had wrought its inevitable work; and at the very moment when she was thinking that Mr. Anerley took a friendly pleasure in her society, he was longing to get away from it as from a torture too heavy to be borne—longing to get away, and unable to go. He might easily have avoided her on this very day, for example, by pleading business occupations; instead, he had looked with impatience for her arrival all the morning and forenoon.

And if he had any intellectual pleasure in studying the curious shades of the young actress's character, it was well that he improved his time; for this was the last day on which she would ever appear to him that enigmatical compound of a childlike gayety and mimicry with a matronly air which was quite as amusingly unnatural. From this period henceforth, the reader who takes the trouble to follow Annie Brunel's history, will find her a changed woman—drawing nearer to that beautiful ideal which one who knew her mother would have expected to find in Annie Napier's only child.

At present she was chiefly concerned with the various sweets which Count Schönstein's cook had sent, and also in trying the effect of squeezing the juice of different kinds of fruit into the iced champagne which she sipped from time to

time. She came to the conclusion that sliced apple added to champagne and iced water greatly improved its flavor; and she appealed to Grete Halm, who had tried all her different specifics, the two drinking out of the same glass. Grete began to fancy that English ladies, though they were very beautiful and had magnificent hair, were little better than children, to amuse themselves with such nonsense.

"I see that Hermann is getting dreadfully impatient," said Miss Brunel, at last; "let us go."

"Pardon, mademoiselle," said Will. "Let us have an understanding first."

She laughed a bright and merry laugh that puzzled the Count extremely.

"Was gibt's, Grete?" said he.

Grete began to explain, with a demure smile, how the Fräulein had held the Herr's arm when a buck was going past; but the Count soon lost the thread of the story, and had to beg Will for a translation.

"I really can't bear to see any one else shoot when I am looking on," said Miss Brunel. "But if I were myself shooting, I dare say I shouldn't care."

"Come, then," said Will, "will you take my gun during the next drive? I will teach you how to hold it and fire—"

"I know that already," she said. It was not the first time she had fired a gun—on the stage.

"And I will fix the gun so that you need have no trouble."

"Agreed," she said; while Grete, who was about to remain behind to assist in packing up the luncheon things, assured her that the holding the gun was quite easy, and that she would be sure to kill a splendid deer.

They had to walk nearly half a mile before they came to the next beat; and by that time they had arrived at a sort of broad ravine or hollow, the hill leading down to which was covered with tall, branchless pines. Down in the valley commenced a tract of young trees and brushwood, which was supposed to be full of deer. While the beaters were drawing a circle round this tract of brushwood, Hermann posted the guns, and courteously gave Will the Haupt-platz, understanding that the young lady was about to try her luck. At this point there was a mass of earth and roots which had been torn up by the falling of a pine—a little embankment some five feet high, over which one could easily command the whole line of brushwood lying in front. This was the spot where Will posted Annie Brunel. He placed the barrel of the gun on the edge of this natural rampart, and then showed her how, whenever she saw a deer spring out into the sunlight down below in the valley, she was noiselessly to point the gun, keep the stock well against her shoulder, and fire.

"Only take care," said he, "that it isn't a dog or a boy that comes out of the bushes."

"What if I shoot you?" she said.

"You can't shoot me, any more than you can shoot yourself. I shall go up the hill a bit to

overlook you, and if it should be a dog, I'll shout out before you murder him."

Here the long, low, steady call of Spiegelmann's horn was heard, with Hermann's reply.

"When the next horn calls, you may begin to look out. Hold out your hand."

She held out her right hand, wonderingly, and showed him the small white fingers.

"It is quite steady; but your heart beats."

"It generally does," she said, with a smile.

"It is a weakness, I know, but—"

Here the fine anticipatory flourish of the keeper's bugle again came echoing through the trees. Will gave over the gun to her, told her to take time and not be afraid, and then retired somewhat farther up the hill. He ensconced himself behind a tall gray pine, whence, without being seen, he could command a view of the entire length of brushwood, and of Miss Brunel in her place of concealment.

"If she only remains cool," he thought, "she is certain to be successful."

Once only she looked round and up the hill toward him, and there was a sort of constrained smile about her lips.

"I am afraid she is getting frightened," he thought now.

The intense, sultry silence of the place certainly heightened her nervous expectation, for she could distinctly hear her heart thumping against her side. Expectancy became a positive pain—an agony that seemed to be choking her; but never for a moment did she think of abandoning her post.

Meanwhile Will's experienced eye failed to detect the least motion among the bushes, nor could he hear the faintest noise from the dogs. Yet Hermann had told him that this was one of the best beats in the neighborhood; and so he patiently waited, knowing that it was only a matter of time.

At length one of the dogs was heard to bellow forth his joyous discovery. Will's breath began to come and go more quickly, in his intense anxiety that his pupil should distinguish herself at the approaching crisis. Then it seemed to him that at some distance off he saw one or two of the young firs tremble, when there was not a breath of wind to stir them.

He watched these trees and the bushes adjoining intently, but they were again quite motionless; the dog, too, only barked at intervals. All at once, however, he saw, coming down a lane in the brushwood, two branched yellow tips, which paused and remained stationary, with only a single bush between them and the open space fronting Miss Brunel. They were the horns of a deer which now stood there, uncertain by which way to fly from the dogs behind him.

"If she could only catch sight of these horns," he said to himself, "and understand to fire through the bush, she would kill him to a certainty."

Evidently, however, she did not see the horns; perhaps her position prevented her. So, with his own heart beating rapidly now, Will waited

for the moment when the dogs would drive the deer out into the clear sunlight, immediately underneath the muzzle of her gun.

A sharp bark from one of the beagles did it. Will saw the light spring of the deer out into the open, and the same glance told him that Annie Brunel had shrunk back with a light cry, and that the gun, balanced for a moment on the edge of the mass of roots, was about to fall on the ground.

At the same moment he received an astounding blow on the side that nearly knocked him over; and his first instinct was that of an Englishman—to utter an oath, clench his fist, and turn round to find a face to strike at. But before the instinct had shaped itself into either thought or action, the sudden spasm passed into a sort of giddiness—he fancied the pine-tree before him wavered—put out his hand to guard himself, and then fell, with a loud noise in his ears.

When Miss Brunel saw the gun tumble on the ground and heard the report, she clasped her hands over her eyes in a vague instantaneous horror of any possible result. The next moment she looked up, and there was a black mass lying on the ground, behind the tall tree. Her only thought was that he lay dead there as she ran to him, and knelt down by him, and caught him round the neck. White-lipped, trembling in every limb, and quite unconscious of what she did, she put her head down to his, and spoke to him. There were three words that she uttered in that moment of delirious pity, and self-reproach, and agony, which it was as well he did not hear; but uttered they were, never to be recalled.

When he came to himself, he saw a white face bending over him, and had but a confused notion of what had occurred. With a vigorous effort, however, mental and physical, he pulled himself together and got into a sitting posture.

"I must have given you such a fright through my stupidity," he said; but all the time he wondered to see a strange look in her eyes—a look he had never seen there before *off the stage*—as she knelt by him and held his hand in hers. She did not speak; she only looked at him with a vague absent delight, as if she were listening to music.

"Poor creature," he thought, "she does not know how to say that she is sorry for having hurt me."

So he managed to get up a quite confident smile, and struggled to his feet, giving her his hand to raise her also.

"I suppose you thought you had killed me," he said, with a laugh, "but it was only the fright knocked me over. I am not hurt at all. Look here, the charge has lodged in the tree."

He showed her a splinter or two knocked off the bark of the tree, and a few round holes where the buck-shot had lodged; but at the same time he was conscious of a warm and moist sensation creeping down his side and down his arm likewise. Further, he pretended not to see that there was a line of red blood trickling gently over his hand, and that her dress had already

caught a couple of stains from the same source.

"What's that?" she said, with a terrified look, looking from her own hand, which was likewise stained, to his. "It is blood—you have been hurt, and you won't tell me. Don't be so cruel," she added, piteously, "but tell me what I am to do, for I know you are hurt. What shall I do? Shall I run to Hermann? Shall I go for the Count? There is no water here—"

"Sit down on those ferns—that's what you must do," said Will, "and don't distress yourself. I suppose one of the spent shot has scratched me, or something like that; but it is of no importance, and you mustn't say anything about it. When the drive is over, I shall walk home. If I had only a little—a little—"

By this time he had sat down, and as he uttered the words another giddiness came over him, and he would have fallen back had she not hastily caught him and supported him.

"It is the blood," he said, angrily; "one would think I couldn't afford to lose as much as the scratch of a penknife would let. Will you allow me to take off my coat—and if you could tie a handkerchief tightly round my arm—"

"Oh, why did you not ask me to do so before?" she said, as she helped to uncover the limb that was by this time drenched in blood.

"Think of what the deer would have suffered if you had hit him instead of me," said Will, with a ghastly smile. "He was a dozen yards nearer you. You seem to like long shots."

But there was a mute, pleading look in her eyes that seemed to appeal against his banter. She seemed to say to him by that dumb expression, "You wrong me. You try to make us strangers by that assumed fun. You do it to cheer me; but you make me a stranger to you, for you are not honest with me."

And somehow he read the meaning of her face; and said to her, in a low voice:

"Shall I be frank with you? This accident is likely to make us too close friends; and it is better I should return to England, if you remain here."

For a moment their eyes met—on his side revealing a secret which she inwardly shuddered to read there—on hers repeating only that mystic, unfathomable expression which he remembered to have seen when he awakened out of his dream.

That was all of explanation that passed between them. She knew now his secret, and by the sudden light of the revelation she looked swiftly back over some recent occurrences and saw the purport of them written in words of fire. Her eyes fell; her own secret was safe; but this new burden of consciousness was almost as difficult to bear.

At this moment the Count and Hermann came up, followed by the nearest keepers and beaters.

"There has been a slight accident," said Will briefly. "Get some one to carry my gun; and I'll walk back to Schönstein."

"If you would like to ride," said Hermann—who, with the others, was quite deceived by Will's manner—"you can get Hans Halm's *wagen*, that was waiting for the baskets and things. Spiegelmann will show you the way. You are not badly hurt?"

"Not at all; not at all. Miss Brunel, will you continue with the party?"

"No," she said, firmly, "I am going back to Schönstein."

"And I," said the Count. "I can't allow you to go unattended. I don't care about any more shooting—"

"Nonsense," said Will (with an inward conviction that two minutes' more talking would find him stretched on the ground), "go on with your sport; and I'll come out to meet you in the evening."

Fortunately, when they reached the shaky old travelling-carriage outside the forest, they found some wine, a good draught of which somewhat revived the wounded man. The hampers and other things were speedily thrown out, and, Spiegelmann having returned to the shooting-party, Will and Miss Brunel got into the vehicle and were driven homeward.

Neither spoke a single word all the way. Once, and quite inadvertently, her hand touched his; and she drew it away. The next moment she looked into his face, and perhaps saw some slight shade of vexation there, for she immediately covered his stained fingers with her own. It was as though she said, "I know your sad secret, but we may at least continue friends."

CHAPTER XIX.

FLIGHT.

It was a change indeed! Life all at once became solemn and full of mystery to her—full of trouble, too, and perplexity. So soon as a messenger had been dispatched to Donaueschingen for a surgeon who was skilled in the extraction of buckshot, Annie Brunel went up to her own room, and sat down there alone. And she felt as if the air had grown thick around her, and was pressing on her; she felt that the old audacious cheerfulness had gone from her, and that the passion, and glow, and terrible earnestness of her stage-life were invading this other life, which used to be full of a frivolous, careless happiness.

Do the other animals become frightened and nervous when the love-making season comes suddenly upon them? Does the lark, when her lover comes down from the sky and sings "My dear soft-breasted little thing, will you be my wife, will you come and build a nest with me, and let me bring you scraps of food when you are tired"—does she get into a state of great tremor, and fancy that the world has suddenly shifted its axis? We know how the least impressionable of men are overawed by this strange natural phenomenon. The old ridiculousness of love—its silliness and comic aspects—are im-

mediately blotted out from their mind by the contemplation of the awful truth—the awful change that lies before them. They shrink from physiology as a species of blasphemy. They will not accept scientific explanation of their idealisms; nor will they believe that any man has ever experienced the sensation they now experience.

But the ordinary awakening of a man or woman to the consciousness of being in love was a very different thing from the sudden revelation which confronted the young actress, as she sat there and pondered, in a bewildered way, over the events of the past hour. To love this man was a crime—and its fatal consequences seemed to stretch on and on, and interweave themselves with her whole future life. How had she fallen into the snare? And he was equally guilty; for his eyes, more fully than his words, had in that supreme moment told her his tragic story.

She thought of the violet-eyed Dove down in that Kentish vale. She thought of her, and mentally prayed for forgiveness.

She had but one sad consolation in the matter; her secret was her own. There now remained for her but to leave Schönstein at once, and the morning's events had paved the way for her decision. So she sent for Mrs. Christmas, and said to her,

"Don't you think a cooler air than what we have here would suit you better?"

The old woman scrutinized her face curiously.

"What's the matter with you, Miss Annie? You look as if you had just come off the stage, and were half-bewildered by the part you had been playing."

"I want an answer, Mrs. Christmas. But I may tell you that I ask because I wish to leave this place at once; You needn't ask why; but if it will not incommode you to travel, I should like to go away now. There is Switzerland, not a day's journey from here; and there are some mountainous districts in this neighborhood—you may choose which you please—"

"Only I must choose to go," said the old woman, patting her cheek. "That's yourself all over as you used to be in the days when you tyrannized over me, and would always have your own way about arranging your parts. Well, Miss Annie, I'm ready to go now, if you like—only Hermann promised to give me two of the most beautiful deer-skins to be got in the Black Forest—"

"They can be sent after us."

The evening was drawing toward dusk when the Count returned. He was greatly shocked on discovering that the accident Will had met with was much more serious than had been fancied, and that the surgeon only stared in astonishment when asked if his patient could come down-stairs to dinner.

"A man who has lost so much blood," said he, significantly, and speaking slowly, that the Count might understand him, "and who suffers from four or five gunshot wounds, is not likely to sit at table for a day or two."

Annie Brunel did not hear this conversation, and as she still believed that Will had only been slightly hurt, and would be able to go about as usual, she informed the Count at dinner of her intended departure. The Herr Graf looked from one to the other of his guests, without being able to utter a syllable. He had been congratulating himself on the brilliant success of this excursion—on the evident gratification experienced by Miss Brunel, on her expressed admiration for Schönstein and all its surroundings. This decision of hers quashed his dearest hopes.

"You surely do not intend to leave us so soon?" he said. "Mrs. Christmas, are you the traitor in the camp?"

Mrs. Christmas prudently forbore to reply.

"Think of leaving Mr. Anerley, after having knocked him over in that sportsmanlike fashion!" exclaimed the Count. "He will think it very ungenerous of you."

"I am extremely sorry," she said, with a look of pained embarrassment on her dark, beautiful face; "but I hope he will forgive our going."

"He may, but I sha'n't," said the Count. "However, if you will, you will. In any case, I hope I may be allowed to escort you toward your new resting-place."

"We should be more cruel still," said the young girl, "if we took you away from your friend. Believe me, we shall want no assistance."

The tone with which she uttered the words was decisive. It said, "You are very kind; but we mean to go alone."

The Count did not enjoy his dinner that evening. He fancied there was something wrong in the arrangement of things—something incomprehensible, provoking, beyond the reach of his alteration. When he persuaded Annie Brunel and her guardian to accept his escort as far as Schönstein, he fancied his skillful calculations had delivered her into his hand. Was there a creature on earth—especially a woman—who could fail to be smitten with a covetous desire for the possession of Schönstein? During that moody meal, while he sat almost angrily silent, two suggestions occurred to him.

Could she have failed to perceive that she might be mistress of Schönstein if she liked? The Count confessed that he had not made any demonstration of affection to her, simply because he wished the natural effect of living at Schönstein to influence her first, and predispose her toward accepting his more openly avowed attentions.

Or was it possible that she had discovered her true position, and learned for herself the wealth and rank to which she was entitled? But if she had made this discovery, he argued with himself, she would not have allowed herself to be the guest of a *parvenu* Count; while he knew that she had received no letters since his arrival.

Seizing the more probable alternative, he bitterly regretted his not having made it more clear to her that a handsome fortune awaited her acceptance. In the mean time these regrets had

the effect of making the dinner somewhat dull affair; and it was rather gruffly that he consented, after dinner, to go round to the inn in order to inquire of Hans Halm the various routes to Switzerland.

As they were going out, she said,

"Will you send word to Mr. Anerley that we shall only be absent for a short time, and that I hope he may be able to come down and see us when we return?"

"The surgeon is still with him," said the Count. "I shall go up and see him myself when we come back."

It was a clear, starlight night; the waning moon had not yet arisen. As they neared the few houses of Schönstein, and saw the orange lights gleaming through the dusk, Mrs. Christmas caught her companion's arm.

They were by the side of the garden adjoining the inn, and from a summer-house which was half hid among apple and plum trees, there came the sweet and tender singing of two young girls—a clear and high, but somewhat undeveloped soprano, and a rich, full, mellow contralto. The three stood for a moment to listen, and the singers in the darkness proceeded to another song—the old *Volkweise* that Grete and Hermann had been wont to sing.

"Im schönsten Wiesen-grunde
Ist meiner Heimath Haus,
Da zog ich-manche Stunde,
In's Thal hinaus;
Dich, mein stilles Thal, grüß ich tausend Mal!
Da zog ich manche Stunde, in's Thal hinaus."

"It is Grete who sings, and I want to see her," said Annie Brunel, stepping softly into the garden, and advancing to the summer-house.

Grete was quite alone with her companion—a young girl who, Miss Brunel could see, even in that partial darkness, was very pretty, and of a type much more common in the North of Baden and Bavaria than in the Schwarzwald. She was not over twelve years of age; but she had the soft, grave eyes, the high forehead, the flaxen hair, and general calm of demeanor which characterize the intellectual South German. She was Grete's confidante and companion; and together, whenever they got a chance, they were accustomed to steal away to this summer-house and sing those concerted melodies which the children of the Black Forest drink in with their mother's milk.

Grete gave a little cry of surprise when she saw the dark form of the young English lady appear; and then her thought was that something had gone wrong with the gentleman who was wounded.

"I want you, Grete, for a moment," said Annie Brunel in French to her.

"Ah, mademoiselle," she said, dislocating her French in sudden compassion, "ce n'est pas que Monsieur Anerley se sent encore malade? L'homme qui mon père envoyait chercher le médecin me dit qu'il va meilleur—"

"Don't disquiet yourself, Grete," said Miss Brunel. "Mr. Anerley is not severely hurt. I

wanted to ask you if you would come with me to Switzerland—"

"To Switzerland!" said Grete; and her companion's soft eyes looked up with a mystic wonder in them.

"Would you like to go?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, very much; but I have promised to go to see my cousin Aenchen Baumer, at the Feldberg, in a day or two."

"Come in-doors, and let us hear what your father says. Your friend will forgive me for a few minutes."

They all then left the garden and went round to the front of the inn. They found the Count and Mrs. Christmas standing outside, and listening to the prodigious singing-bout which was being held within by the keepers and the beaters; the chorus following each verse of the various hunting-songs being accompanied by the measured beating of hands and feet on the tables and wooden floor.

"If mademoiselle goes forward to the window," said the little grave German girl with the yellow hair, "she will hear better, and Herr Spiegelmann is about to sing 'Der Weisze Hirsch.'"

They all went forward to one of the many small windows, and looked in. The men were sitting in a picturesque undress round the table, their long-bowled china pipes in their fingers or mouth, and chopins of pale yellow wine before them. Grete's father was standing by, laughing and joking with them; the old grandmother from time to time replenishing the tall transparent bottles. They had all been singing the elaborate chorus to the hunting-song, "Im Wald und auf der Haide"—all except the ancient Spiegelmann, who sat solemnly over his pipe-tube, and winked his small black eyes occasionally as if trying to shut in the internal pleasure the rattling melody gave him. His large black mustache caught the tobacco-smoke that issued from his lips; and his wrinkled, weather-tanned face, like the other sunburnt faces around, caught a bronzed glow from the solitary candle before him.

"The Spiegelmann missed a buck in the second drive," said one. "He will pay the forfeit of a song."

"I was driving, not shooting, the roe," growled the Spiegelmann, though he was not displeased to be asked to sing.

All at once, before any of his comrades were prepared, the venerable keeper, blinking fiercely, began to sing, in a low, querulous, plaintive voice, the first stanza of a well-known ballad, which ran somewhat in this fashion:

"'Twas into the forest three sportsmen went,
On shooting the white deer they were bent."

Suddenly, and while Miss Brunel fancied that the old man was singing a pathetic song of his youth, there rang out a great hoarse chorus from a dozen bass voices—the time struck by a couple of dozen horny hands on the table:

"Husch, husch! bang, bang! trara!"

Then Spiegelmann, gravely and plaintively as before, took up the thread of the wondrous story:

"They laid themselves down beneath a fir tree,
And a wonderful dream then dreamed the three.
(*All.*) Hush, hush! bang, bang! trara."

Here a tall, Italian-looking keeper, who hailed from the Tyrol, and who was sitting next to Spiegelmann, sang forth the experiences of the first dreamer:

"I dreamt that as I went beating the bush,
There ran out before me the deer—hush, hush!"

His neighbor, Bagel, who had once been complimented by Kaiser Francis of Austria, and was never done with the story, personated the second dreamer:

"And as from the yelp of the beagle he sprang,
I riddled his hide for him there—bang, bang!"

The third from Spiegelmann, a short, stout little man, called Falz, who had once been a clock-maker in Whitechapel, was the next dreamer:

"So soon as the deer on the ground I saw,
I merrily sounded my horn, trara!"

The burden of the tale now returned to Spiegelmann, who thus finished it, and pointed the moral:

"Lo! as they lay there and chatted, these three,
Swiftly the wild deer ran past the tree:
And ere the three huntsmen had seen him aright,
O'er hill and o'er valley he'd vanished from sight!
(*All.*) Hush, hush! bang, bang! trara!
Hush, hush! bang, bang! trara!"

"I declare," said little Mrs. Christmas, standing on tiptoe, to peep in at the window on the bronzed faces, and the dim candle, and the long narrow tables in the low-roofed room, "it is quite like a scene in a play, though they don't sing very well."

"They keep capital time," said the Count, who looked upon them as so many performing animals, belonging to himself.

"Voulez-vous entrer, mademoiselle?" said Grete, hesitatingly. "La fumée—j'en suis bien fâchée—"

She went into the inn, nevertheless; and Hans Halm was summoned to give his opinion about the various roads leading down to Basle or Schaffhausen. Meanwhile, the keepers had sent a polite message, through Margarethe, to the young English lady, hoping that she enjoyed the day's sport; that her companion's accident had not been serious; and that she would not be annoyed to hear one or two of the old Schwarzwald songs.

It was now for the first time that Annie learned the true extent of the injury which Will had suffered; and this had the effect of immediately altering her resolutions. It was with a dangerous throb of the heart that she was told how he might not leave his bed for days, or even weeks, so prostrated was he by loss of blood; and anxious—terribly anxious, as she was to get free from the place, she could not bear the thought of stealing away, and leaving him to the unknown chances of the future.

The Count had almost begun to fancy that it was the horror of the accident that she had

caused which was driving her away from the too painful witnessing of its results; but she now said that she would not leave until Will was entirely out of danger. He could not understand her, or her motives; above all, he was puzzled by the unwonted earnestness of her expression—its new life and intensity. He knew nothing of the fire at the heart which kept that slumbering light in the dark eyes.

"And in a few days, Grete, you go to the Feldberg?" she asked.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"There is an inn there at which one can stay?"

"There is, mademoiselle. Right on the top of the mountain, if you choose to go so high. My cousin Aenchen lives down in the valley."

"I hope, Miss Brunel," said the Count, anxiously, "you won't think of leaving Schönstein so long as you remain in this district. The accident which has happened, I know, may rob the neighborhood of some of its attractions: but what better will the Feldberg be?"

She paid no attention to him. She was only determined not to see Will Anerley again; and yet there was in her heart a vague desire to be near him—to be under the same daylight—to look on the same scenes, and hear the same quaint, strange talk that he listened to.

"When must you go to see your cousin?" she asked.

"Very shortly," said Grete. "Aenchen Baumer goes to a convent in Freiburg, where she will learn English, and fine needlework, and many things. She is a good friend of mine, and a companion once; and I want to see her before she goes."

"If you wait a few days, we shall go to the Feldberg together."

Grete clasped her hands with delight.

"And will madame, your mamma, go also?" she asked, rejoiced to think she had not the journey to make alone.

"Yes; but the lady is not my mamma, Grete. She died when I was scarcely your age; and this is my second mother, who has been with me ever since."

All the next day she waited, lingering about, and unable to do any thing in her feverish anxiety and impatience. She was not afraid to see him. She had suddenly been awakened to a sweet and new consciousness of strength—a fullness of life and will which she knew would sustain her in any emergency. She had no fear whatever, so far as she herself was concerned. But she dreaded the possible effect of their meeting again in these too seductive circumstances; she dreaded it, while she thought of Dove. Already there lay over her the shadow of the wrong done to the bright young English girl whose pretty ways and violet eyes she so well remembered—a wrong inscrutable, not to be condoned or forgotten. Whose was the fault? She only knew that she dared no longer stay there after having once read Will's secret in that quick mutual glance in the forest.

Another day passed, and yet another: the torment was becoming unbearable. She could not leave the place while danger yet hung over him; on the other hand, her delay was provoking the chances of that very meeting which she had resolved should not take place. Many a time she thought she could go away happy and content if only she might shake hands with him and look once in his eyes; then there came a misty remembrance of Dove's face floating before her, and the young girl seemed to regard her reproachfully.

She began to think that a little far-off glimpse of him would do: moderating her desires, she grew to long for that as the one supreme boon, bearing which with her she could go away with a glad heart. Only a glimpse of him, to see how he looked, to bid a mute farewell to him, herself unseen.

"Our patient is much better this morning," said the Count to her, on the fourth day. "Won't you come up stairs, and see him?"

"No," she said, softly, looking down.

She was more incomprehensible to him than ever. Formerly she seemed to be quite familiar with him; she was happy and careless in his presence; she responded to his nonsense with nonsense of her own. Now she seemed to have been translated to another sphere. He was no longer jovial and jocular with her. He watched and studied the Madonna-like calm of the clear, dark face, until he felt a sort of awe stealing over him; the intense, dark life of her eyes was a mystery to him.

In these few days she began to wonder if she were not rapidly growing old: it seemed to her that every thing around her was becoming so serious and so sad.

"And if I do look old, who will care?" she said to herself, bitterly.

The Count, on the other hand, fancied she had never been so beautiful; and, as he looked on her, he tried to gladden his heart by the thought that he was not a mercenary man. To prove to her and himself that he was not, he swore a mental oath that he would be rejoiced to see her a beggar, that so he might lift her up to his high estate. Indeed, so mad was the man at the time—so much *beside* himself was he—that he was ready to forswear the only aim of his life, and would have married Annie Brunel only too willingly, had it been proved to him that she was the daughter of a gipsy.

"Another day's rest is all that the doctor has prescribed," said the Count. "I hope to see our friend down to breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Is he so much better?" she asked.

She inquired in so earnest a tone that he fancied her anxiety was to know if the damage she had done was nearly mended, and so he said,

"Better? He is quite better now. I think he might come down and see us this morning, unless you would prefer paying *him* a visit."

Immediately after breakfast Miss Brunel went over to the inn, and there she found Hans Halm and his daughter.

"Grete," she said, "could you go to the Feldberg to-day?"

"Yes," said Grete.

"Could you be ready to start by twelve o'clock?"

"My father's *wagen* has gone to Donaueschingen, mademoiselle," she said.

"The Count will lend us a carriage, and you must come with me."

The matter having been arranged, she returned to the Count, and told him of her intention, firmly and quietly. A week previous, he would have laughed and pooh-poohed the notion; now he was excessively courteous, and, though he regretted her decision, he would do every thing in his power, etc.

"Will you let Hermann come with us as far as the Feldberg?"

"I devote Hermann entirely to your service for a week—a month—as long as you choose," said the Count.

English Polly was got up from the kitchen—where she had established a species of freemasonry between herself and the German servants—to assist in the packing; and while she and Mrs. Christmas were so engaged, Annie Brunel sat down, and wrote these lines on a slip of paper:

"I am glad to hear you are better. You wished us not to meet again, and as it is easier for me to go than you, I leave here in an hour. You will forgive me for having caused you so much pain. Good-bye. A. B."

She put the paper in an envelope, and took it down to the Count.

"I have written a note to Mr. Anerley, explaining our going away so abruptly. Will you please send it to him?"

"I will take it to him myself," said the Count, and he took it.

A few minutes afterward, when the Count returned, she was seated at the window, looking out with vague, absent eyes on the great undulations of the black-green forest, on the soft sunlight that lay upon the hills along the horizon, and on the little nook of Schönstein with the brown houses, the white church, and the large inn. She started slightly as he entered. He held another envelope in his hand.

"I have brought a reply," he said, "but a man does not write much with his left hand, in bed."

On a corner of the sheet of paper she had sent, there were written these words, "*I thank you heartily. God bless you! W. A.*" And her only thought as she read them was, "Not even in England: not even in England."

Grete appeared, blushing in her elaborate finery. Her violet bodice was resplendent, with its broad velvet collar embroidered with gold; her snow-white sleeves were full-blown and crimp; and her hair was braided, and hung down in two long tails from underneath the imposing black head-dress, with its ornamentation of gold beads. Grete had manufactured another of those embroidered miracles, which she was now carrying in her trunk to Aenchen Baumer.

It was with a little sob of half-hysterical delight that she drove out of the stone courtyard and realized the stupendous fact that Hermann Löwe was to accompany them to the Feldberg.

Mrs. Christmas, studying the strange expression of her adopted daughter's face, thought she was becoming remarkably like the Annie Napier whom she knew long ago.

"May she have a very different fate!" said the old woman to herself, as she thought of the weary and solitary life-struggle, the self-denial, the heroic fortitude of those bygone and bitter days.

CHAPTER XX.

HOMEWARD.

"If mademoiselle chooses," said Grete, "we can walk along the side of the Titi See, and allow the carriage to go on by itself. The road is very pretty from the lake onward to the Feldberg."

Mademoiselle was in that frame of mind when any change involving action was a delicious relief, and she gladly embraced the proposal.

"If the old lady prefers to drive all the way," said Grete, with a touch of maidenly pride, "Hermann ought to accompany her. I can find the way for us two, mademoiselle."

That also was agreed to, the distance being too great for Mrs. Christmas to walk. And so Annie Brunel and Grete Halm set out upon the winding path, or rather track, which runs along the shore of the beautiful Titi See—here skirting the edge of the rocky promontories which jut out into the still blue lake, there cutting through the dense coppices lying in the sunshine along the foot of the hills, or again passing some deep-roofed and sleepy farmhouse, with its small stone chapel standing in the yard. Grete reverentially crossed herself every time they passed one of these numerous private chapels; and her companion, peeping in through the wooden bars, generally saw within the sanctuary a large framed lithograph of the Virgin Mary in red and blue, with a vast number of little gilt trinkets and other pious offerings lying on the altar. Some of these chapels had forms within capable of accommodating a congregation of from twelve to twenty persons. One or two people had built no chapel at all, but had hollowed out a niche in the wall surrounding their garden, and had placed therein a wooden crucifix, more or less painted, exhibiting the details of the crucifixion with mediæval exactitude. And Grete, being a good girl, crossed herself as she saw these humble memorials of a devout faith.

"Why did you send Hermann away, Grete?" said Annie Brunel, as they walked along.

"Because, mademoiselle, I wished him to know that I could do without him," said Grete Halm.

"You are very fond of him, are you not?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, but—"

"And he of you?"

"He is very fond of me, I know," said Grete, simply.

"I don't wonder at it; but have you ever asked yourself why he is fond of you?"

"Why, mademoiselle? Because—because I am a girl and he is a man, and he wants to be married."

Annie Brunel laughed; it was the first smile her companion had seen on her face for some days.

"But suppose he did not want to be married—suppose he could not be married to you—would he be fond of you? Or suppose you knew, Grete, that he was to marry some one else, what would you do?"

"I should do nothing, mademoiselle; I should be miserable."

"You would not cease to love him?"

"If I could, yes; if not—"

"If not, you would only be miserable."

The tone in which the words were uttered caused Grete to look up suddenly in her companion's face. She saw nothing there but the inwardly-reflecting eyes, the beautiful, pale, dark complexion, and the placid sweetness of the unknissed lips.

"In England, Grete, I am an actress. They say that an actress must never reflect, that she educates impulses, and that she can not pause, and regard her position, and criticise herself. If I cease to feel any pleasure in immediate gratifications, if I feel ill at ease, and dissatisfied with myself, and fancy that the stage would no longer give me any pleasure—must I cease to be an actress?"

"Is mademoiselle in earnest?"

Grete Halm could not believe that her companion was an actress. Had she ever seen, even in Carlsruhe itself, an actress with such a noble air, with such a face, and such a manner?

"I am in earnest, Grete. I have been an actress all my life; I feel as if I were one no longer."

"What has changed you, mademoiselle, may I be permitted to ask?"

"I do not know, myself, Grete. But I have turned an old woman since I came to the Black Forest; and I shall go back to England with a sort of fear, as if I had never been there before."

Since she came to the Black Forest. For a moment a suspicion crossed Grete's mind that she must be miserable through loving some one; but so completely had she been imbued with the idea of her companion being some mysteriously beautiful and noble creature, who could not be moved by the meaner loves and thoughts of a girl like herself, that she at once dismissed the supposition. Perhaps, she thought, the shock of severely injuring her friend still affected her, and had induced a temporary despondency. Grete therefore resolved, in her direct way, to be as amusing as possible; and she never tired of directing her companion's attention to the beautiful and wonderful things they saw on their way—the scarlet grasshoppers which rattled their

wings among the warm grass, the brilliantly colored beetles, the picturesque crucifixes by the wayside, or the simultaneous splash of a lot of tiny fish among the reeds as some savage pike made a rush at them from the deeper water.

In process of time they left the soft blue breadth of the lake behind them, and found themselves in the valley leading up to the Feldberg. Grete struck an independent, zigzag course up the hill's side, clambering up rocky slopes, cutting through patches of forest, and so on, until they found themselves on the high mountain road leading to their destination. Nothing was to be seen of the carriage; and so they went on alone, into the silence of the tall pines, while the valley beneath them gradually grew wider, and the horizon beyond grew more and more distant. Now they were really in the Black Forest of the old romances—not the low-lying districts, where the trees are of modern growth, but up in the rocky wilderness where the magnificent trunks were encrusted and coated with lichens of immemorial age—where the spongy yellow-green moss, here and there of a dull crimson, would let a man sink to the waist—where the wild profusion of underwood was rank and strong with the heat of the sun and the moisture of innumerable streams trickling down their rocky channels in the hill-side—where the yellow light, falling between the splendid stems of the trees, glimmered away down the narrow avenues, and seemed to conjure up strange forms and faces out of the still brushwood and the fantastic gray lichens which hung everywhere around. Several times a cock capercaillie, with two or three hens under his protection, would rise with a prodigious noise and disappear in the green darkness overhead; occasionally a mountain-hare flew past; and Grete, with an inherited interest, pointed out to her friend the tiny foot-marks of the deer on the sand of the rough and winding road.

"See, mademoiselle, there is Aenchen Baumer's house."

They had come to an opening in the pines which revealed the broad yellow valley beneath, with its sunlit road running like a thread of silk through it. Grete's friend's house was a little white building, with green casements, and a few vines growing up one of the gables; it was separated from the road by a paling which interrupted the long line of rough stone posts which a paternal government had stuck in the ground to prevent carriages tumbling still farther down into the bed of the hollow.

"You have come a long way out of your road, Grete," said Miss Brunel.

"I came to accompany you, mademoiselle. I can easily go back to Aenchen's house before the evening."

The upward road now grew more and more jagged, rough, and full of mud-holes, until, at last, they left the forest region altogether, and got into the high pasture-districts of the mountain. Finally, as the path became a track, grass-grown and rocky, they arrived at a square gray

building, with a small garden attached, which stood on the summit of the shoulder of the hill.

"It is the Feldberg Inn," said Grete.

"Is it pleasant to live on the top of the mountain?" asked her companion.

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle; only it is a little cold. And when you look out at night—in the moonlight—it frightens one—for all the house seems surrounded by a yellow mist which floats about and makes figures, and then it sweeps away, and you see the garden sharp and clear. It is the clouds, you know. Franz Gersbach has told me of his having been on the top of the Niessen one morning before sunrise, and while all the great mountains opposite—the Jungfrau, and the Mönch, and the Eiger, and all these—were still cold and dark, he saw Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc, away down in the south, with a pale pink flame on their peaks in the midst of the green sky. Here we have no snow on our mountains, except in the winter-time; and then sometimes the people up here have their supplies cut off for a long time."

There was a tall, fair-faced, sleepy-looking man standing at the door of the inn, with whom Grete shook hands. The giant blushed slightly, answered her questions in laconic monosyllables, and then led the way into the house, apparently relieved to be out of the observation of the two girls.

"It is the landlord's brother," said Grete, "and a friend of mine."

"You have a number of friends," said Annie Brunel, with a smile; "and they seem to be all big men. If you were as small as I am, one might account for your liking big men."

Grete Halm looked at her companion. There could be no doubt about the German girl being the taller and certainly the stouter of the two; and yet until that moment she had fancied that Miss Brunel was ever so much taller than she.

"It is the manner of your walk, mademoiselle, and your figure—and perhaps the expression of your face—that make me think you tall. No. I see you are not tall."

For a moment Margarethe's soft brown eyes dwelt on her companion—perhaps with a touch of wistful, puzzled longing to know why grace of form should so touch our sympathies; then she turned to the large Heinrich Holzmann—whose big shoulders should have been more attractive to a girl's eye than another girl's waist—and said that the young English lady wished the best apartments in the house. Margarethe further gave him to understand that his guests would be very particular about their cookery; and, above all, that they would not submit to have but one fork and knife to attend them through four or five courses. Heinrich said "Yaw" in a grave manner to all her directions, and begged her to tell the English lady that his brother, who spoke French, would be home next day.

"But the lady and her friend—who will be here presently—must not starve till to-morrow," said the practical Grete.

"Nein," said Heinrich, absently.

"I mean they must have dinner here, and you must look after it, Heinrich Holzmann."

"Ja, ja."

"You have plenty in the house?"

"Ja."

"The lady says that after the carriage arrives, you can have dinner prepared; that is, the lady and her friend at one table, and Hermann Löwe, the coachman, and I at another. Do you understand?"

"Freilich."

"If the girls want help, ask me."

"Danke schön, Grete."

"And as you don't seem to have any body here, shall I take the lady up stairs and pick out what rooms she wants?"

"Yes, if that pleases you," said the fair-haired giant, and therewith he opened the door for Miss Brunel, and made her a grave bow as she went with Grete into the passage, and so up to the rooms above.

It was nearly half an hour afterward that the carriage arrived, and Mrs. Christmas, with much excitement, caught Annie in her arms and kissed her, declaring she had never expected to see her again. The road they had come!—the precipices they had skirted, with the three horses slipping on the smooth rocks at the very brink!—the vehicle leaning over as if it were about to topple headlong down!—the jolting into deep ruts and over blocks of stone!

"I screamed," she said, "and insisted on being helped out of the carriage; for they would have me sit still, declaring there was no danger. Danger!"

And the little woman shivered.

"So you walked all the way?"

"Until we got down into the valley."

Grete and Hermann were invited to dine with the two ladies; and, in the evening, they all convoyed the young German girl down to the house of her friend.

For several days they remained on the Feldberg, beguiling the time as best they might. Mrs. Christmas had now quite recovered her normal condition of health and spirits, and labored hard to discover why her companion was so preoccupied, restless, and absent in manner. Why, too, was this journey down through Switzerland being indefinitely postponed? Every morning it was—

"Miss Annie, do we start to-day?"

"Not to-day, mother. Let us have another day's quiet."

"You will kill yourself with dullness, Miss Annie. There is nothing for you to do."

"Let us climb to the top of the peak, and see the tower—"

"I have tried twice and failed. And if you persist in going up there alone, you will tumble down into that horrible lake you told me of."

"Then let us descend to the lake to-day, if you please."

She could not leave the neighborhood. She lingered there, day after day, that she might

have tidings from Schönstein. Two letters she had received from the Count told her nothing definite; they were very polite, grave, respectful communications, in which he hoped she would visit Schönstein again on her return. Hermann, on going back to his master, had written to Grete Halm, and merely mentioned that the English gentleman was still in his room, and that the surgeon did not speak very confidently of the case.

This day, also, she prevailed on Mrs. Christmas to stay; and together, after breakfast, they set out in quest of the Feldsee, the small lake that lies deep down in the heart of the mountain. They were furnished with a few directions from Heinrich Holzmann's brother; but as neither time nor direction was of much consequence to them, they plunged carelessly into the forest, and proceeded slowly to descend the side of the mountain. At last, they came upon a path which led down through the jumbled and picturesque confusion of shattered rock, smooth boulder, moss, fern, and herbage, that lay around the foot of the tall, resinous-smelling pines; and this track they leisurely followed until, from the twilight of the trees, it led them out into the obscure daylight which dwelt over the gloomy tarn they sought.

Nothing could well be more lonely or melancholy than this dark and silent lake lying in its circular bed—evidently an extinct volcanic crater—overshadowed by tall and perpendicular crags hemming it in on every side, and scarcely ever having a breath of wind to stir its leaden-like surface. The tall, thinly-clad rocks, rising to the circular breadth of white sky above, were faintly mirrored in the black water underneath; and the gloomy stillness of the quite motionless picture was not relieved by the least stir or sound of any living thing. This hideous hole, its surface nearly four thousand feet above the level of the sea, is of unknown depth: no wonder that the superstitious Schwarzwalders have legends about it, and that the children tell you of the demon-deer that was wont to spring over the tall precipices above, and so lure on the unwary huntsman and his horse to destruction.

There was a boat lying moored in a creek at one corner of the lake, and of this Annie Brunel at once took possession. She insisted on Mrs. Christmas getting into it; and then, with a few strokes of the oars, she pulled out to the centre of the lake. Mrs. Christmas did not at all like the aspect of the place; and, if she had known that she was floating over an extinct volcano, she would probably have liked it less.

"It looks like a place for murders to be committed," she said.

When they had reached the centre of the dark water, Annie laid aside the oars and seated herself in the stern of the boat with her companion. There was no wind, no current: the boat remained almost motionless.

The old woman took the young girl's hand, and said to her:

"Come now, Miss Annie, you must tell me

what has been the matter with you lately—what has vexed you—or what troubles you.”

“I have been thinking of returning to England,” she said, absently.

“Why should that trouble you?”

“I am afraid of going back.”

“Bah! I have no patience with you. You are as much a child as ever—as when you used to whimper in a make-believe way, and cause your mother to laugh and cry together over your natural turn for acting.”

“My natural turn for acting is going—is nearly gone,” said she, with a smile; “and that is what I am afraid about. I am beginning to fear a lot of faces.”

“Then *why* will you remain in such a dreadfully lonely place as this mountain inn? That it is which breeds strange fancies in you, my girl, don’t doubt of it. Afraid of faces! Didn’t you use to tell me that you were never conscious of seeing a face at all when you were on the stage?”

“I may have said so,” she replied, musingly. “I don’t think I ever did see faces—except as vague orange-colored lamps in a sort of ruddy darkness—over the blaze of the footlights, you know. Certainly I never thought of them, nor heeded them. When I went off, and heard the noise of their hands and feet, it seemed like the sound of some machine with which I had no concern. I don’t think I ever feared an audience in my life. My mother used to be my audience, as she stood in the wings and looked at me with the half-smile and kindly eyes I remember so well; and then I used to try to please you, you know, and never succeeded, as you also know, Lady Jane; and lately I have not thought of pleasing any body, but of satisfying a sort of delirium that came over me.”

“You never pleased me! You wicked creature! If I were blind and came into a theatre where I heard you playing your ‘Juliet,’ my eyes would open of their own accord.”

“That time has passed over, Lady Jane. I am afraid of going to England. I should see all the faces now, and wonder what the people were saying of my hands outstretched, or of my kneeling posture, or of my elocution. I feel that if I were to get up just now, in this boat, and speak two sentences—”

“You would have us both laughing. But did you ever try before, my dear, to act to a scene? You might as well try to speak to an empty theatre as to that horrible loneliness over there. It was Mr. Bridges, the stage-manager at N—, if you remember, Miss Annie, who used to rehearse in the morning his speech before the curtain—used to wave his hand and smile to the empty benches, and then bow himself out backward. But at night, when the people were there, he always forgot the smile and the wave of the hand, and mumbled like a schoolboy. And as for your not being able to act when you hear the stir of a crowded house on the other side of the curtain, and know there are a dozen bouquets waiting for you in the boxes, why it’s nonsense, my dear.”

“I am afraid of it none the less, mother, and I shall dread putting myself to the test.”

“All the result of this living out of the world,” said Mrs. Christmas, dogmatically. “Say, shall we start to-morrow morning, Miss Annie?”

“Yes.”

When they returned to the inn there was a letter from Schönstein awaiting Miss Brunel. She knew from the peculiar handwriting who had sent it, and opened it joyfully, knowing that he was at least well enough to write. These were the words:

“Schönstein, Thursday.

“MY DEAR MISS BRUNEL,—Ever since you left I have bitterly reproached myself for having given you so much annoyance and trouble. I hear that you are living, without amusement or companions, in the Feldberg Inn. May I beg of you to return here, adding the assurance that you will not be troubled by my presence in any way whatever? Whether you do or not, I can not permit you to leave without bidding you good-bye—especially as we may not see each other in England—and so, if you will forgive me this once, I propose to cross over to the Feldberg to-morrow and visit you,” etc., etc.

She read no more; the cramped left-hand writing had told her enough. She hurriedly wrote a reply, peremptorily forbidding him to be at the trouble and danger of such an expedition; and added that, before he could possibly be at the Feldberg, she would be on her way to Freiburg and Basle. Then she called the elder Holzmänn, desired him to get a messenger to take over this letter to Schönstein that day, and informed him that on the next morning she and her companion would set out for the south.

It was a point of maidenly honor with her that she should go away with her sad secret her own; and who could tell what disclosure might happen, were she to see him suffering from the effects of the wound, entreating her to stay, and with his own love for her speaking in his eyes? He was a man, and it did not matter; as for her, she closed this fatal tenderness in her heart, and would fain have deceived herself into denying its existence. Truth to say, she felt a touch of shame at her own weakness; was dimly conscious that her virginal purity of soul was tainted by a passion which she dreamed was a guilty one; and knew that her punishment lay in the loss of that innocent gayety and thoughtlessness which had hitherto made her life so pleasant.

“We may not see each other in England,” she said to herself, gazing at the crooked and trembling lines on the paper. “Not in England, nor elsewhere, will be my constant prayer so long as I live.”

So they left the gloomy mountain, and, passing through the Höllenthal once more, reached Freiburg; and from thence, by easy stages, they made the round of the Swiss lakes until, as fate would have it, they came to Thun. There they rested for a day or two, preparatory to their undertaking the voyage to England.

Here a strange incident befell Annie Brunel. Their first walk lay along the shore of the lake; and no sooner had they left the side of the rapid, bright-green Aar, than Mrs. Christmas noticed a strange, intense look of wonder settling over her companion's face. Wistfully, and yet curiously, the dark-gray eyes dwelt on the expanding lake, on the long, curving bays, on the sunlit mountains opposite, and on the far-off snow-peaks of the Bernese Alps.

"I have seen all this in a dream," she said.

"Or in a picture," suggested Mrs. Christmas.

"It is more than a dream or a picture," she continued, in a half-frightened way, as they walked along. "I know the place—I know it—the shore over there—the village down yonder at the point, and the smoke hanging over the trees; I am getting quite giddy with—remembering—"

"My dear!" said Mrs. Christmas.

Her companion was now quite pale, and stood fixed to the spot, looking over the long scene in front of her with a wild stare. Then she turned round, as if almost in fear, and no sooner had she done so than she uttered a slight cry and seemed ready to sink to the ground.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she said. "I knew the house was there before I turned my head."

She looked up at the handsome building on the plateau above as if it were some horrible thing come to torture her. It was only the house in which Harry Ormond had bidden her mother farewell.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN ENGLAND.

MR. MELTON was overjoyed to see Annie Brunel in London again. He had spent half his fortune in beautifying his theatre, in getting up elaborate scenery for the new piece with which he was to welcome the return to town of his patrons, and in providing costly properties. So long as the heroine of the piece was wandering among the mountains of the Schwarzwald, it was impossible that the manager's mind could be well at ease.

"You shall come round now, and see what we have done for you, and give us your opinion," said he, politely.

Indeed, he would have liked to kiss her just then, in a fatherly way, to show how delighted he was to have her back again. He saw pictures of overflowing audiences before his mind as he looked on the quiet little figure before him, on the dark face, and the large, grave eyes.

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. A tolerably clear light fell upon the stage, a dusky twilight hung over the rows of empty benches in the pit, and the gloomy darkness behind the galleries was here and there lit up by a solitary lamp. One or two gilders were still at work on the front of the dress-circle; overhead an echoing clang of hammer and nail told that

carpenters were busy; and a vague shouting from the dusky region of the "flies" revealed the presence of human beings in those dim Olympian heights. Everywhere, as usual, the smell of escaped gas; here and there an odor of size or paint.

As they descended from the dark corridor behind the dress-circle into the wings, a mass of millinery ran full tilt against Mr. Melton, and then started back with a slight cry and a giggle.

"God bless my soul!" said the manager, piously, although that was not the part of his body which had suffered.

The next moment Miss Featherstone had thrown her arms around Annie Brunel's neck and was kissing her and calling her "my dear" with that profusion of sentiment which most actresses love to scatter over the object, *pro tem.*, of their affection. Miss Featherstone was attired in a green silk dress—in many a love-scene had that rather dingy piece of costume figured, on the stage and elsewhere—a blue cloth jacket, a white hat with a scarlet feather, and yellow gloves. During this outburst of emotion, Mr. Melton had caught sight of a young gentleman—to whom he gave thirty shillings a week in order that he might dress as a gentleman should, and always have a good hat to keep on his head while walking about in a drawing room—who had been in pursuit of Miss Featherstone, and now sneaked away in another direction.

"And so you've come back, my dear, and none of the German princes have run away with you! And how well you look—I declare I'm quite ashamed of myself when I see the color in your cheeks; but what with rehearsals, you know, my dear, and other troubles—"

She heaved a pretty and touching sigh. She intimated that these quarrels with the young gentleman who escorted her to and from the stage-door—quarrels which came off at a rate of about seven per week—were disturbing the serenity of her mind so far as to compel her to assist nature with violet-powder and rouge.

"Do you know, my dear," she said, in a whisper that sent Mr. Melton away on his own business, "he swears he will forsake me forever if I accept a part in which I must wear tights. How can I help it, my dear? What is a poor girl to do?"

"Wear trowsers," said Annie Brunel, with a smile.

"Nothing will please him. He would have all my comic parts played in a train half a mile long. At last I told him he had better go and help my mother to cut my skirts and petticoats of a proper length; and he pretended to be deeply hurt, and I haven't seen him since."

Then she tossed her willful little head with an air of defiance.

"He will write to me before I write to him."

"It is too cruel of you," said her companion.

"Yes, my dear, you may laugh; but you have no burlesque parts to play. And you have nobody sitting in the stalls watching you every

movement, and keeping you in a fright about what he is thinking of you."

"No," said Annie Brunel, rather absently, "I have nobody to watch me like that. If I had, I should not be able to go upon the stage, I think."

"And the bitter things he says about the profession—and particularly about Mr. Gannet, and Mr. Marks, and Mr. Jobson—all because they are young men, and he fancies they may be so polite as to lift a glove for me if I let it fall. You know, dear, that I don't encourage them. If there's any fun at rehearsal, that I don't begin it."

"When we met you just now—"

"That was only some of Mr. Murphy's nonsense. Oh, I declare to you, no one knows what I have suffered. The other evening, when he and I got into a cab, he glared at the man who opened the door for us. And the fuss he makes about cosmétique and Bismuth is something dreadful."

"He must be a monster."

There now ensued a little fragment of thorough comedy. For a moment the elderly young lady, who had been assuming throughout the tone of a spoiled child, stood irresolute. There was a petulance on her face, and she had half a mind to go away in high dudgeon from one who was evidently laughing at her. Then through this petulance there broke a sort of knowing smile, while a glimmer of mischievous intelligence appeared in her eyes; and then, with an unaffected comical giggle, she once more threw her arms round Annie Brunel's neck and kissed her.

"I'm very wicked, I know," she said, with a shrug of the shoulders, "but I can't help it. What's bred in the bone, you know. And it's all the men's fault, for they keep teasing one so. As for him, if he writes to me, and makes an apology, and promises to be a good boy, I'll make friends with him. And I'll be very good myself—for a week."

It was with a cold inward shiver that Annie Brunel stepped out upon the stage and looked round the empty theatre. She tried to imagine it full of people, and yellow light, and stir, and she knew within herself she dared not venture before them. Even without that solitary pair of eyes watching her movements, and without the consciousness that she might be producing a strong impression, for good or evil, on one particular person whose estimation she desired, she trembled to think of the full house, and the rows of faces, and her own individual weakness.

"What do you think of the decorations, Miss Brunel?" said Mr. Melton coming up.

"They are very pretty," she said, mechanically.

"With your 'Rosalind,' the theatre should draw all London to it."

"It is 'Rosalind' you mean to play?" she asked, scarcely knowing what she said.

"Certainly," replied the manager, with astonishment. "Don't you remember our agreement? If you turn round, you will see the new

forest-scene Mr. Gannet has painted; perhaps it may remind you of something in the Black Forest."

For a moment or two she glanced over the great breadth of canvas, covered with gnarled oaks, impossible brushwood, and a broad, smooth stream. With a short "No, it is not like the Black Forest," she turned away again.

"Miss Featherstone will play 'Celia,' and you know there is not a 'Touchstone' in the world to come near Bromley's. Mrs. Wilkes refuses to play 'Audrey,' luckily, and Miss Alford will play it a deal better. I have had several rehearsals, every body is declared letter-perfect; and we only want you to put the keystone to the arch, as one might say."

She turned quickly round and said to him,

"If I were at the last moment prevented from playing in the piece, could Miss Featherstone take 'Rosalind,' and some one else play 'Celia?'"

"What do you mean, my dear Miss Brunel?" said the manager, aghast. "You frighten me, I assure you. I calculated upon you; and after all this expense, and your agreement, and—"

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Melton," she said, quietly. "I mean to play the part so as to give every satisfaction both to you and myself, if I can. I only asked in the event of any accident."

"Come," said he, kindly, "I can't have you talk in that strain, with such a prospect before us. Why, we are going to set all London, as well as the Thames, on fire, and have the prices of the stalls going at a hundred per cent. premium. An accident! Bah! I wish Count Schönstein were here to laugh the notion out of your head."

So it was, therefore, that the play was put in full rehearsal for several days, and Mr. Melton looked forward hopefully to the success of his new venture. Sometimes he was a little disquieted by the remembrance of Miss Brunel's singular question; but he strove to banish it from his mind. He relied upon his new scenery and decorations, and upon Annie Brunel; the former were safe, and he would take care to secure the latter.

The gentlemen of the press had been good enough to mention the proposed revival in terms of generous anticipation. Altogether, Mr. Melton had every reason to hope for the best.

Occasionally he observed an unusual constraint in the manner of his chief favorite, and sometimes a listless indifference to what was going on around her. Once or twice he had caught her standing idly behind the foot-lights, gazing into the empty theatre with a vague earnestness which revealed some inward purpose. He still trusted that all would go well; and yet he confessed to himself that there was something about the young actress's manner that he had never noticed before, and which he could not at all understand.

Mrs. Christmas seemed to share with him this

uneasy feeling. He knew that the old lady was now in the habit of lecturing her pupil in a derisive way, as if trying to banish some absurd notion from her mind; and whenever he approached, Mrs. Christmas became silent.

For the first time during their long companionship Mrs. Christmas found her young friend incomprehensibly obstinate, not to say intractable. Night and day she strove to convince her that in anticipating nervousness and failure, she was rendering both inevitable; and yet she could not, by all her arguments and entreaties, remove this gloomy apprehension.

"I can not explain the feeling," was the constant reply. "I only know it is there."

"But you, of all people, Miss Annie! Girls who have suddenly come to try the stage gets fits of stage-fright naturally; but people who are born and bred to it, who have been on the stage since their childhood—"

"Why should you vex yourself, mother? I have no dread of stage-fright. I shall be as cool as I am now. Don't expect that I shall blunder in my part, or make mistakes otherwise—that is not what I mean. What I fear is, that the moment I go upon the stage, and see the men and women all around me, I shall feel that I am just like one of them, only a little lower in having to amuse them. I shall feel as if I ought to be ashamed of myself in imitating the real emotions of life."

"You never had any of those fantastic notions before. Didn't you use to pride yourself on your indifference to the people?"

"I used to."

"What has changed you?"

"My growing older," she replied, with a sad smile. "I begin to feel as if those things that make up acting had become part of my own life now, and that I had no business to burlesque them any more on the stage. I begin to wonder what the people will think of my lending myself to a series of tricks."

And here she fell into a reverie, which Mrs. Christmas saw it was useless to interrupt. The worthy old woman was sorely puzzled and grieved by the apostasy of her most promising pupil, and ceased not to speculate on what subtle poison had been allowed to creep into her mind.

Meanwhile the opening night had arrived. People had come back from the moors and Mont Blanc, and every place in the theatre had been taken. Mr. Melton already enjoyed his triumph by anticipation, and tried every means of keeping up Annie Brunel's spirits. She was bound to achieve the most brilliant of all her successes, as he confidently told her.

The words were in the heart, if not on the lips, of Mrs. Christmas, as the kindly old woman busied herself in Annie Brunel's dressing-room, and prepared her favorite for the coming crisis. She had a vague presentiment that it was to be a crisis, though she did not know why.

By the time the inevitable farce was over, the house was full. Miss Featherstone, rushing down stairs to change her costume of a barmaid for that of "Celia" brought word that all the critics were present, that Royalty was expected, and that her own particular young gentleman had laughed so heartily at the farce that she was sure he was in a good humor, and inclined to let bygones be bygones.

"So you must cheer up," said Mrs. Christmas, blithely, when Nelly had gone; "you must cheer up, and do great things, my dear."

"Am I not sufficiently cheerful, Lady Jane?"

"Cheerful? Cheerful? Yes, perhaps cheerful. But you must forget all you have been saying about the people, and mind only your character, and put fire and spirit into it. Make them forget who *you* are, my dear, and then you'll only think of yourself as 'Rosalind.' Isn't your first cue '*Be merry*'?"

"Then I will be merry, mother, or any thing else you wish. So don't vex your poor little head about me. I shall add a gray hair to it if you bother yourself so much."

"You would find it hard to change it now unless you changed it to black," said Lady Jane.

When "Rosalind" and "Celia" together appeared on the stage, a long and hearty welcome was given forth from every part of the house. Mr. Melton was standing in the wings with Mrs. Christmas, and his dry, gray face brightened up with pleasure.

"They have not forgotten her, have they?" he said, triumphantly.

"How could they?" was the natural response.

From that moment the old woman's eyes never left the form of her scholar, during the progress of the play. Keenly and narrowly she watched the expression of her face, her manner of acting, the subtle harmony of word and gesture which, in careful keeping, make the part of "Rosalind" an artistic wonder. And the more narrowly she studied her pupil's performance, the more she convinced herself that there was nothing to be found fault with. The timid pleasantries, the tender sadness, the coy love-advances, tempered and beautified by that unconscious halo of modesty and virgin grace which surrounds the gentlest of all Shakspeare's heroines, were there, before her eyes, and she was forced to say to herself that no "Rosalind" could be more charming than this "Rosalind." She did not reflect that never before had she been constrained so to convince herself, and that never before had she been so anxious to know the effect on the audience.

That, so far as was yet appreciable, was satisfactory. The mere charm of admirably artistic acting, combined with a graceful figure, and a pretty face, was enough to captivate any body of

CHAPTER XXII.

ROSALIND.

"Ah, *mon bon petit public*, be kind to my lecture child?" says Achille Talma Dufard, when his daughter is about to go on the stage for the first

spectators. Mrs. Christmas, however, dared not confess to herself that they seemed to want that electric thrill of sympathy which had been wont to bring them and the young actress immediately *en rapport*. Once, only, did they in the first act catch that swift contagion of delight which flashes through an audience bound by the master-spell of genius. It was where "Rosalind," having graced the victorious wrestler with a chain from her own neck, is about to go away with "Celia," and yet is loth to go without having had speech of the young man who has so awakened her interest. The half-interpreted longing, the hesitating glance, and maiden bashfulness with which she turned to him and said:

"Did you call, sir?—
Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies,"

her eyes first seeking his face, and then being cast down, as the words became almost inaudible—provoked the house into a sudden tempest of applause which covered her disappearance from the scene. Mrs. Christmas caught her as she came off, and kissed her, with nervous tears in her eyes.

At the end of the first act, she was called before the curtain; any one calmly observing the house would have seen that it was not very enthusiastic, and that it fell to talking almost before she had passed behind the curtain at the opposite side. Then she went down to her dressing-room.

Mrs. Christmas welcomed her and complimented her with an emphasis which was a little forced and unnecessary. Annie Brunel said nothing, but stood and contemplated, with her straight-looking honest eyes, the poor little woman who was courageously trying to act her part naturally. Then she sat down.

"Do you think I did my best, mother?" she said. And again she fixed her large eyes, with a kind conciliation in them, on her aged friend.

"Of course—"

"And you are watching me, I think?"

"Yes."

"And the house?"

"A little," said Mrs. Christmas, rather nervously.

"Then you know," she said calmly, "that I have made a total failure; that the people think so, and that to-morrow every one, including the papers, will say so."

"My dear—!"

"Why should we not speak frankly, mother? I felt it within myself, and I saw it in their faces. And I knew it before I went on the stage."

"That is it! That has done it all!" exclaimed the old woman, inclined to wring her hands in despair and grief. "You convinced yourself that you were going to fail, and then, when you went on the stage, you lost command over yourself."

"Had I not command over myself?" the young girl asked, with a smile. "I had so great command of myself that I knew and was conscious of every thing I did—the tiniest thing—

and kept continually asking myself how it would impress the people. I was never in the least excited; had I been—but there is no use talking, Lady Jane. Help me to change my dress; I suppose I must go through with it."

So Mrs. Christmas officiated in place of Sarah, whom she always ordered out of the way on grand occasions; and, as she did so, she still administered council and reproof, not having quite given up hope.

Two of the most distinguished of the critics met in the lobby leading to the stalls.

"A pity, is it not?" said one.

The other merely shrugged his shoulders.

The general run of the critics fancied that Annie Brunel had added another to her list of brilliant successes, and were already shaping in their brain elaborate sentences overflowing with adjectives.

Lord Weyminster, whom people considered to have a share in the proprietary of the theatre, went behind the scenes and met Mr. Melton.

"This won't do, my boy," he said.

"Do you think not?" said the manager, anxiously. "They received her very warmly."

"They received Miss Brunel warmly, but not her 'Rosalind.'"

"What's to be done?"

"Change the piece."

"I can't. Perhaps it was only a temporary indisposition."

"Perhaps," said his lordship, carelessly. "I never saw such a difference in the acting of any woman. Formerly she was full of fire; to-night she was wooden—pretty enough, and proper enough, but wooden."

Further consolation or advice Mr. Melton could not get out of his patron. In despair, he said that his lordship was exaggerating a temporary constraint on the part of the young actress, and that the succeeding scenes would bring her out in full force.

The wood scene was of course charming. Miss Featherstone's young gentleman, sitting in the stalls, surrendered himself to the delicious intoxication of the moment ("Celia," it will be remembered, wears long petticoats), and wondered whether he could write a poem on the forest of Ardennes. He was in that fond period of existence when the odor of escaped gas, anywhere, at once awoke for him visions of green-wood scenery and romantic love-affairs; and when the perfume of cold cream conjured up the warm touch of a certain tender cheek—for Miss Featherstone, when in a hurry to get home from the theatre, occasionally left her face unwashed.

The people never lost interest in the play. Indeed, being Londoners, they were sufficiently glad to see any character played with careful artistic propriety, and it was only as an after-thought that they missed the old thrill of Annie Brunel's acting. It could always be said of the part that it was gracefully and tenderly done, void of coarse comedy and of claptrap effects. It struck a certain low and chastened key of

sweetness and harmony that partially atoned for the absence of more daring and thrilling chords.

And yet Annie Brunel went home sick at heart. The loss of popular favor did not trouble her; for had not the people been remarkably kind, and even enthusiastic, in their final call? It was the certain consciousness that the old power had passed away from her forever—or rather, that the intensity and emotional abandonment of her artistic nature had been sucked into her own personal nature, and was never more to be separately exhibited as a beautiful and wonderful human product.

"Mother, I am tired of acting," she said. It has been weighing upon me ever so long; but I thought I ought to give myself one more chance, and see if the presence of a big audience would not remove my sickness. No; it has not. Every thing I had anticipated occurred. I was not frightened; but I knew that all the people were there, and that I could not command them. I was not 'Rosalind' either to them or to myself; and it was not 'Rosalind' whom they applauded. The noise they made seemed to me to have a tone of pity in it, as if they were trying to deceive me into thinking well of the part."

All this she said quietly and frankly; and Mrs. Christmas sat stunned and silent. It seemed to the old woman that some terrible calamity had occurred. She could not follow the subtle sympathies and distinctions of which the young actress spoke: she knew only that something had happened to destroy the old familiar compact between them, and that the future was full of a gloomy uncertainty.

"I don't know what to say, Miss Annie. You know best what your feelings are. I know there's something wrong somewhere—"

"Don't talk so mournfully," she said. "If I don't act any more we shall find something else to keep us out of starvation."

"If you don't act any more!" said the old woman, in a bewildered way. "If you don't act any more! Tell me, Miss Annie, what you mean. You're not serious? You don't mean that because your 'Rosalind' mayn't have gone off pretty well, you intend to give up the stage altogether—at your time of life—with your prospects—my darling, tell me what you mean?"

She went over and took her companion's two hands in her own.

"Why, mother, you tremble as if you expected some terrible misfortune to happen to us. You will make me as nervous as yourself if you don't collect yourself. You have not been prepared for it as I have been. I have known for some time that I should not be able to act when I returned to London—"

With a slight scream, she started up and caught her friend, who was tottering and like to fall, in her arms. The old woman had been unable to receive this intelligence all at once. It was too appalling and too sudden; and when at last some intimation of it came home to her mind, she reeled under the shock. She uttered some incoherent words—"my charge of you,"

"your mother," "the future"—and then she sank quite insensible upon the sofa to which Annie Brunel had half carried her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME AGAIN.

COUNT SCHÖNSTEIN was in love. His ponderous hilarity had quite gone out of him. After Miss Brunel's departure, he moved about the house alone and disconsolate; he was querulous about his meals; he forgot to tell lies about the price of his wines. He ceased to joke about marriage; he became wonderfully polite to the people about him, and above all to Will Anerley; and every evening after dinner he was accustomed to sit and smoke silently in his chair, going over in his mind all the incidents of Annie Brunel's visit, and hoping that nothing had occurred to offend her.

Sometimes, in a fit of passionate longing, he wished he was again a tea-dealer, and she the daughter of one of his clerks. He grew sick of his ambitious schemes; inwardly cursed the aristocracy of this and every other country; and prayed for some humble cottage, with Annie Brunel for his wife, and with nothing for himself to do but sit and smoke, and watch the grape-clusters over the veranda.

Twenty years before he had been afflicted by the same visions. They did not alter much his course of life then; nor did he permit them to move him much now—except after dinner, when most people became generously impulsive and talkative. In one of these moods he confessed to Will the passion which disturbed his repose.

Will stared at him, for the mere thought of such a thing seemed to him a sort of sacrilege; but the next moment he asked himself what right he had to resent the Count's affection for Annie Brunel as an insult, and then he was silent.

"Tell me, have I a chance?" said the Count.

"How can I tell you?" he replied.

"You were very friendly with her. You do not imagine there is any body else in the young lady's graces?"

"I don't know of any one whom Miss Brunel is likely to marry; but, as I say, how can I tell?"

"You imagine I have a fair field?" asked the Count, rather timidly.

"Oh, yes!" said Will, with a laugh, in which there was just a touch of bitterness. "But that is not the way you used to talk about women, and marriage, and so forth. Do you remember how you gloated over the saying of that newspaper man who was at the 'Juliet' supper—about being 'sewn up in a theological sack with a partner for life'? I suppose you were only whistling in the dark, to scare the ghosts away, and now—"

There was no need to complete the sentence. The doleful look on the Count's rubicund face told its own tale. He shook his head, rather

sadly, and contemplatively stirred his Moselle with a bit of biscuit.

"It's time a man like me was married. I have plenty of money to give my wife her own way: we sha'n't quarrel. There's that big house standing empty; you can't expect people to come and visit you, if you've nobody to receive them. Look how perfectly Miss Brunel could do that. Look at the grace of her demeanor, and her courtesy, and all that: why, though she's ever so little a thing, she looks like an empress when she comes into a room. I never could get elsewhere such a wife as she would make."

"Doubtless not; but the point is to get her," said Will, almost defiantly—he did not know whether to laugh at or be indignant with the Count's cool assumption.

"I tell you I would marry her if she was nothing but what she is—" the Count said, vehemently, and then he suddenly paused, with a look of frightened embarrassment on his face.

"How could she be any thing else than what she is?" asked Will, carelessly: he had not observed the Count's trepidation.

"Oh—well—ah—if she were nothing more than an ordinary actress, without the manners of a lady, I should be inclined to marry her, on account of her—her sweetness of disposition, you know."

"What magnanimity!" said Will.

"Laugh as you please," said the Count, with a touch of offended dignity, "there are few men in my position would marry an actress. If I should marry Miss Brunel, I should consider that while she did me a favor I paid her quite as great a compliment. Look at the estimation in which actresses are held. Look at those women of the—theatre; at Miss —, and Miss —, and Miss —. Don't the public know all about them? And the public won't stop to pick out one respectable actress from the lot, and be just to her. They all suffer for the sins of the majority; and any actress, whatever may be her personal character, ought to know that she lies under the ban of social suspicion, and—"

"Excuse my interrupting you. But you needn't seek to lower Miss Brunel in my opinion: I am not going to marry her. And I should advise you not to attempt to lower her in her own opinion, if you mean to remain friends with her. You can't humble a woman into accepting you; you may flatter her into accepting you. If a woman does not think she is conferring a favor in marrying you, she won't at all—that is, if she is the sort of woman any man would care to marry."

"Leave that to me, my boy, leave that to me," said the Count, with a superb smile. "I rather fancy, if flattery is to win the day, that I shall not be far behind."

"And yet I heard you one evening say to Nelly Featherstone that 'all pretty women were idiots.' How could any woman help being offended by such a remark?"

"Why, don't you see, you greenhorn, that Nelly isn't pretty?"

"And you as good as told her so," said Will. "Besides, Nelly, like every other woman, fancies she is pretty in a certain way, and would rather that you had informed her of her idiocy than of her plainness."

The Count blushed deeply. In making the remark to Miss Featherstone, he had imagined he was exhibiting a most remarkable and subtle knowledge of human weakness; and hoped to console her for the shape of her nose by sneering at the stupidity of prettier women. But the Count was a rich man, and a great favorite of Mr. Melton; and Nelly, being a prudent young woman, pocketed the affront.

A variety of circumstances now transpired to hasten the return of both Will and the Count to England. The former could do scarcely any thing to the business for which he had come, through his inability to use his right arm. There were, besides, certain growing symptoms of irritation in the wounds which he had fancied were slowly healing, which made him anxious to consult some experienced English surgeon. Such were his ostensible reasons.

Under these circumstances, what pleasure could the Count have in remaining in Schönstein alone? He preferred to have Will's company on the homeward journey; and besides, he was personally interested in learning whether the injuries his friend had suffered were likely to become more dangerous. Such were his ostensible reasons.

But the crowning thought of both of them, as they turned their back upon Schönstein, was—"I shall soon see Annie Brunel."

As they passed through the village, Margarethe Halm came out from under her father's door, and the driver stopped the carriage.

"You will see the young English lady when you return home?" said Grete to Will, with a blush on her pretty brown face.

"And if I do?"

"Will you give her this little parcel: it is my work."

With that she slipped the parcel into his hand. At this moment Hans Halm came forward and bade both the gentlemen good-bye; and in that moment Grete, unnoticed, timidly handed up to Hermann, who was seated beside the driver, another little parcel. There was a slight quivering of the lips as she did so; and then she turned away, and went up to her own room, and threw herself, sobbing, on the bed in quite a passion of grief, not daring to look after the carriage as it rolled away into the forest.

Hermann stealthily opened the packet, and found therein a little gilt *Gebetbuch*, with colored pictures of the saints throughout it, and a little inscription in front in Grete's handwriting. Franz Gersbach, having been over at Donaueschingen, had secretly bought the tiny prayer-book for her; and he knew all the time for whom it was intended.

"She is a good girl," said Hermann, "and a good girl makes a good wife. I will go once more to England, but never after that—no, not

if I had seven hundred Counts for my master."

They stopped a day at Strasbourg, and there they found a lot of English newspapers of recent date.

"Look what the people are saying of Miss Brunel!" said Will, utterly confounded by the tone in which the journals spoke of "Rosalind."

The Count took up paper after paper, and eagerly scanned such notices of the pieces as he could find.

"They are not very enthusiastic," said he; "but they are really most complimentary—"

"Complimentary? Yes; but only to Miss Brunel, not to 'Rosalind.' Don't you see in every one of them how the writer, wishing to speak as highly as possible of her, scarcely knows how to throw cold water on the play? And yet cold water is thrown abundantly. The unanimity of these critiques simply says this—that Miss Brunel's 'Rosalind' is a failure."

"How will she bear it?" said the Count.

"She will bear it with the self-possession and sweetness that always cling to her."

For a moment he thought of an old simile of his: of her being like an Æolian harp, which, struck harshly or softly, by the north wind or the gentle south, could only breathe harmony in return. Would that fine perfection of composure still remain with her, now that her generous artistic aspirations seemed to have been crushed in some way? He knew himself—for the divine light of her face in certain moments had taught him—that there is no joy upon earth to be compared with the joy of artistic creation. He could imagine, then, that the greatest possible misery is that which results from strong desire and impotent faculty.

"It is 'Rosalind' that is wrong, not she," he said. "Or she may be suffering from some indisposition—at any rate, they may spare their half-concealed compassion. Let her get a part to suit her—and then!"

He was not quite satisfied. How was it that none of the critics—and some of them were men of the true critical, sensitive temperament, quick to discern the subtle personal relations existing between an artist and his art—dwelt upon the point that the part was obviously unsuited to her? Indeed, did not every one who had seen her in divers parts know that there were few parts which were so obviously suited to her?

"I know what it is!" said the Count. "There aren't enough people returned to town to fill the theatre, and she has been disheartened." And he already had some recklessly extravagant idea of filling the house with "paper" at his own expense.

"But there you read that the theatre was crammed," said Will.

"True," said the Count, gravely. "I hope there's nobody whom she has refused to see, or something like that, has been bribing all the papers out of spite?"

"They do that only in French plays," said Will. "I should think it more likely that the

girl has been put out of sorts by some private affliction. We shall see when we get home."

Then he reflected with a bitter pang that now he was debarred from ever approaching that too dear friend of his, and asking about her welfare. Whatever she might be suffering, through private sorrow or public neglect, he could no longer go forward and offer a comforting hand and a comforting word. When he thought that this privilege was now monopolized by the big, well-meaning, blundering Count, he was like to break his own resolve and vow to go straight to her the moment his feet touched English soil.

They crossed the Channel during the day; when they arrived in London, toward the evening, Will drove straight to his chambers, and the Count went home.

"You won't go down to St. Mary-Kirby," the latter had said, "to see that charming little Dove? What a devilish fine woman she'll make! you ought to consider yourself a happy fellow."

"It is too late," said Will, "to go down tonight. Besides, they don't expect me until tomorrow."

So he went to his lodgings; and there, having changed his dress, he found himself with the evening before him. He walked round to his club, read one or two letters that awaited him, went up to the smoking-room, and found not a human being in the place—nothing but empty easy-chairs, chess-board tables, dishevelled magazines, and a prevailing odor of stale cigars—and then he went out and proceeded in the direction of the theatre in which Annie Brunel was at that moment playing. That goal had been uppermost in his thoughts ever since he left Calais pier in the morning.

The tall, pale, muscular man—and people noticed that he had his right arm in a sling—who now paid his four or five shillings, walked up stairs, and slunk into the back seat of the dress-circle, was as nervous and as much afraid of being seen as a schoolboy thieving fruit. Perhaps it was the dread of seeing, as much as the fear of being seen, that made his heart beat; perhaps it was only expectation; but he thought himself that in the twilight of the back seats of the circle his figure would be too dusky to be recognized, especially by one who had to look—if she looked at all—over the strong glare of the footlights.

The act drop was down when he entered—the orchestra playing the last instalment of Offenbach's confectionery music. The whole house was in the act of regarding two young ladies, dressed as little as possible in white silk, with wonderful complexions, towers of golden hair on their heads, and on their faces an assumed unconsciousness of being stared at, who occupied a box by themselves. The elder of them had really beautiful features of an old French type—the forehead low and narrow, the eyelids heavy, the eyes large, languid, melancholy, the nose thin and a little *retroussée*, the mouth small, the lips thin and rather sad, the cheeks blanched

and a trifle sunken, the line of the chin and neck magnificent. The beautiful, sad woman sat and stared wistfully at the glare of the gas; sometimes smiling, in a cold way, to her companion, a plump, commonplace beauty of a coarse English type, who had far too much white on her forehead and neck. Together, however, they seemed to make a sufficiently pretty picture to provoke that stolid British gaze which has something of the idiot but more of the animal in it.

When the curtain rose again the spectators found themselves in Arden forest, with the Duke and his lords before them; and they listened to the talk of these poor actors as though they heard some creatures out of the other world converse. But from Will Anerley all the possibility of this generous delusion had fled. He shrank back, lest some of the men might have recognized him, and might carry the intelligence of his presence to Annie Brunel. Perhaps the Duke had just spoken to her; perhaps she was then looking on the scene from the wings. It was no longer Arden forest to him. The perspective of the stream and of the avenues of the trees vanished, and he saw only a stained breadth of canvas that hid her from his sight. Was she walking behind that screen? Could the actors on the stage see her in one of the entrances? And was it not a monstrous and inconceivable thing that these poor, wretched, unambitious, and not very clean-shaven men were breathing the same atmosphere with her, that they sometimes touched her dress in passing, that her soft dark eyes regarded them?

You know that "Rosalind" comes into this forest of Arden weary, dispirited, almost broken-hearted, in company with the gentle "Celia" and the friendly "Touchstone." As the moment approached for her entrance, Anerley's breath came and went all the quicker. Was she not now just behind that board or screen? What was the expression of her face, and how had she borne up against the dull welcome that awaited her in England? He thought he should see only "Rosalind" when she came upon the stage—that Annie Brunel might now be standing in the wings, but that "Rosalind" only would appear before him.

He never saw "Rosalind" at all. He suddenly became conscious that Annie Brunel—the intimate companion who had sat beside him in long railway journeys, who had taken breakfast with him, and played cards with him in the evening—had come out before all these people to amuse or interest them; and that the coarse, and stupid, and vicious, and offensive faces that had been staring a few minutes ago at the two creatures in white silk were now staring in the same manner at her—at her who was his near friend. A wonderful new throb went through his heart at that thought—a throb that reddened his pale cheek. He saw no more of "Rosalind" nor of Annie Brunel either. He watched only the people's faces—watched them with eyes that had no pleasant light in them. Who were these people, that they dared to examine her critically, that they presumed to look on her with interest,

that they had the unfathomable audacity to look at all? He could not see the costermongers in the gallery; but he saw the dress-coated publicans and grocers around him, and he regarded their stupidly delighted features with a savage scorn. This spasm of ungovernable hatred for the stolid, good-hearted, incomprehensible British tradesman was not the result of intellectual pride; but the consequence of a far more powerful passion. How many years was it since Harry Ormond had sat in his box, and glared with a bitter fury upon the people who dared to admire and applaud Annie Brunel's mother?

In especial there were two men, occupying a box by themselves, against whom he was particularly vengeful. As he afterward learned from Mr. Melton, they were the promoters of a company which sold the best port, sherry, champagne, hock, burgundy, and claret at a uniform rate of ten shillings a dozen; and, in respect of their long advertisements, occasionally got a box for nothing through this or that newspaper. They were never known to drink their own wines; but they were partial to the gin of the refreshment-room; and, after having drunk a sufficient quantity of that delicious and cooling beverage, they grew rather demonstrative. Your honest cad watches a play attentively; the histrionic cad assumes the part of those florid-faced gentlemen—mostly officers—who come down to a theatre after dinner and laugh and joke during the progress of the piece, with their backs turned on the performers. A gentleman who has little brains, much loquacity, and an extra bottle of claret, is bad enough; but the half-tipsy cad who imitates him is immeasurably worse. The two men in question, wishing to be considered "d—d aristocratic," talked so as to be heard across the theatre, ogled the women with their borrowed opera-glasses instead of looking at the play, and burst forth with laughter at the "sentimental" parts. It was altogether an inspiring exhibition, which one never sees out of England.

And the gentle "Rosalind," too, was conscious that these men were looking at her. How could it be Arden forest to her—how could she be "Rosalind" at all—if she was aware of the presence of such people, if she feared their inattention, and shrank from their laugh?

"What the papers have said about her is right," said Will to himself. "Something must have happened to dispirit her or upset her, and she seems not to care much about the part."

The charm of her acting was there—one could sit and watch with an extreme delight the artistic manipulation of those means which are obviously at the actor's hand—but there was a subtle something wanting in the play. It was pretty and interesting while it lasted; but one could have permitted it to drop at any moment without regret.

There is, as every body knows, a charming scene in the drama, in which "Rosalind," disguised as a youth, coaxes "Orlando" to reveal all his love for her. There is in it every variety

of coy bashfulness, and wayward fun, and half-suggested tenderness which an author could conceive or the most accomplished actress desire to represent. When "Orlando" wishes he could convince this untoward page of his extreme love for "Rosalind," the disguised "Rosalind" says merrily, "Me believe it? You may as soon make her that you love believe it; which, I warrant, she is apter to do, than to confess she does: that is one of the points in the which women still give the lie to their consciences. But, in good sooth," she adds, suddenly changing her tone into tender, trustful entreaty, "are you he that hangs the verses on the trees, wherein 'Rosalind' is so admired?" And then again she asks,

"But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?"

"Rosalind" turned the side of her face to her lover, as if her ear wished to drink in the sweet assurance; and her eyes, which fronted the audience, stared vacantly before her, as if they too were only interested in listening; while a light, happy smile dawned upon her lips. Suddenly the eyes, vacantly gazing into the deep theatre, seemed to start into a faint surprise, and a deadly pallor overspread her face. She tried to collect herself—"Orlando" had already answered—she stumbled, looked half-wildly at him for a moment, and then burst into tears. The house was astonished, and then struck with a fit of admiration which expressed itself in rounds of applause. To them it was no hysterical climax to a long series of sad and solitary reveries, but a transcendent piece of stage-effect. It was the over-excited "Rosalind" who had just then burst into tears of joy on learning how much her lover loved her.

"Orlando" was for the moment taken aback; but the applause of the people gave him time to recover himself, and he took her hand, and went on with the part as if nothing had happened. He, and the people in the stage-boxes saw that her tears were real, and that she could scarcely continue the part for a sort of half-hysterical sobbing; but the majority of those in the theatre were convinced that Annie Brunel was the greatest actress they had ever seen, and wondered why the newspapers had spoken so coldly of her performance.

Will knew that she had seen him; he had caught that swift, electric glance. But, not knowing any reason why the seeing him should produce such profound emotion, he, too, fancied that her bursting into tears was a novel and pretty piece of acting. However, for his own sake, he did not wish to sit longer there; and so he rose and left.

But the streets outside were so cold and dark compared with Arden? The chill night air, the gloomy shadows of the broad thoroughfare, the glare of gas-lamps on the pavement, and the chatter of cabmen, were altogether too great a change from "Rosalind" and the poetry-haunted forest. Nor could he bear the thought of leaving her there among those happy faces, in the

warm and joyous atmosphere of romance, while he walked solitarily home to his solitary chambers. He craved for her society, and was content to share it with hundreds of strangers. Merely to look upon her face was such a delight to him that he yielded himself to it, irrespective of consequences. So he walked round to another entrance, and stole into a corner of the pit.

Was the delight or the torture the greater? He was now within view of the rows of well-dressed men and women in the stalls, who seemed so pleased with "Rosalind." It is one of the profound paradoxes of love, that while making selfish men unselfish and generous to a degree, it begets in the most unselfish of men an unreasoning and brutal self-regard. He hated them for their admiration. He hated them the more especially that their admiration was worth having. He hated them because their admiration was likely to please Annie Brunel.

It might have been imagined that his anger would have been directed chiefly against those idiotic drapers' assistants and clerks who sat and burlesqued the piece, and sneered at the actress. But no; it was the admiration of the intelligent and accomplished part of the audience he feared; was it not sufficient to interpose between him and her a subtle barrier? He could have wished that the whole theatre was hissing her, that so his homage and tenderness and respect might be accounted as of some worth. He fancied she was in love with the theatre, and he hated all those attractions of the theatre which caused her love, with a profound and jealous hatred.

At length the play came to an end, and there was no longer an excuse for his remaining, as Annie Brunel, of course, did not play in the short piece which followed. So he went outside, and in getting into the street he found himself behind the two wine-merchants who had been in the box.

"Why not?" said the one to the other, gayly. "If she gets into a rage, so much the better fun."

"Rosalind" must be d—d pretty in a fury."

"All right," said the other, with a hiccup.

Will had heard the words distinctly; and the mere suspicion they suggested caused his blood to boil. When the two men turned into the narrow lane leading round to the stage-door of the theatre, he followed them with his mouth hard and firm, and his eyes not looking particularly amiable.

At the entrance to the lane stood Miss Brunel's cab. He recognized the face of the venerable jarvie who was accustomed to wait for her every evening.

He passed up the lane; the two men had paused in front of the small wooden door, and were trying to decipher, by the aid of the lamp overhead, the features of whosoever passed in or out.

"She won't be here for an hour," said one of them.

"Shouldn't wonder if she went home in Rosalind's dress," said the other, with another hiccup.

"She'll 'it you, Arry, if you speak to her."

"Let her. I'd rather like it,' pon my soul."

The stage-door was continually being swung to and fro by some one passing in or out, but as yet there was no sign of Annie Brunel. At length, however, some of the people who had been engaged in the play came out, and Will knew that she would soon follow.

"Was she likely to be alone? Would they dare to speak to her?" He glanced down at the sling which supported his right arm. Deprive an Englishman of the use of his right arm, and he feels himself utterly helpless. There was one happy thought, however: even if she were alone she would be closely veiled; and how were these half-tipsy cads to recognize her?

She came out; she was alone and veiled, but Will knew the graceful figure, and the carriage of the queenly head.

By some demoniac inspiration the two men seemed also to take it for granted that the veiled face was that of Annie Brunel. The less tipsy of the two went forward, overtook her as she was going down the lane, and said to her,

"I beg your pardon, Miss—Miss Brunel—"

She turned her head, and in the gaslight Anerley saw that there was a quick, frightened look of interrogation in her eyes. She turned away again, and had hurried on almost to the open street, when the man caught her arm with his hand.

"Not so fast, my dear. Won't you look at my card—"

"Out of the way, idiot!" was the next thing she heard, in a voice that made her heart beat; and in a moment the man had been sent reeling against the opposite wall.

That was the work of an instant. Inflamed with rage and fury, he recovered himself, and was about to aim a blow at his assailant's face, when Anerley's left arm so successfully did duty without the aid of the wounded right one, that the man went down like a log, and lay there. His companion, stupefied, neither stirred nor spoke.

"Get into the cab, Miss Brunel," said Will abruptly.

He accompanied her across the pavement: an utter stranger could not have been more calm and cold. For a second she looked into his face, with pain, and wonder, and entreaty in her eyes; and then she took his hand, which had been outstretched to bid her good-bye, and said,

"Won't you come with me? I—I am afraid—"

He got into the cab; the driver mounted his box and drove off; and so it was that Will, scarcely knowing how it had come about, found himself sitting once more beside Annie Brunel, with her hand still closed upon his.

together in a supreme moment of passion: their faces irradiated with the magical halo of a glowing twilight. His tender, entreating, wistful, worshipful; hers, full of the unconscious sweetness and superb repose of an indescribably exalted beauty. His eyes are upturned to hers; but hers dwell vaguely on the western warmth of life. And there is in the picture more than one thing which suggests the strange disassociation and the sadness, as well as the intercommunion and fellowship, of the closest love.

Why, asks the impatient reader, should not a romance be always full of this glow, and color, and passion? The warm light that touches the oval outline of a tender woman's face is a beautiful thing, and even the sadness of love is beautiful: why should not a romance be full of these supreme elements? Why should not the romancist cut out the long prose passages of a man's life, and give us only those wonderful moments in which being glows with a sort of transformation?

The obvious reason is, that a romance written in such an exalted key would be insufferably unreal and monotonous: even in the "Venetianisches Gondellied," full of pure melody as it is, one finds horribly incongruous sharps and jarring chords which are only introduced to heighten the keen delight of the harmony which is to follow. Add to this the difficulty of setting down in words any tolerable representation of one of those passionate, joyous moments of love-delight which are the familiar theme of the musician and the painter.

That moment, however, in which Will Anerley met Annie Brunel's eyes, and took her hand, and sat down beside her, was one of these. For many past days and weeks his life had been so unbearably dull, stagnant, prosaic, that the mere glad fact of this meeting drove from his mind all consideration of consequences. He looked in her eyes—the beautiful eyes that could not conceal their pleasure—and forgot every thing else. For a time, neither of them spoke: the delight of being near to each other was enough; and when they began to recall themselves to the necessity of making some excuse to each other for having broken a solemn promise, they were driving along Piccadilly, and, away down in the darkness, they could see the luminous string of orange points that encircle the Green Park.

"I only returned to London to-day," he said, and there was a smile on his face, for he half pitied his own weakness; "and I could not help going to see you. That was how I kept my promise. But you are not very angry?"

"No," she said, looking down.

There was no smile upon her face. The events of the last few weeks had been for her too tragic to admit of humorous lights.

"You ought not to have come," she said the next minute, hurriedly. "You ought to have staid away. You yourself spoke of what might happen; and the surprise and the pain of seeing you—I had no thought of your being there—and I was sufficiently miserable at the time not to

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LAST WORD.

EVERY one knows Noel Paton's "Dante and Beatrice"—the picture of the two lovers caught

need any other thing to disturb me—and now—and now you are here, and you and I are the friends we have been—”

The passionate earnestness of this speech, to say nothing of its words, surprised and astounded him: why should *she* have reason to be disturbed?

“Why should we not be friends?” he said.

She looked at him with her big, tender, frank eyes with a strange expression.

“You force me to speak. Because we can not continue friends,” she said, in a voice which was almost harsh in its distinctness. “After what you said to me, you have no right to see me. I can not forget your warning; and I know where you ought to be this evening—not here, but down in St. Mary-Kirby.”

“That is true enough,” said Will, gloomily. “I couldn’t have gone down to St. Mary-Kirby to-night: but, as you say, I have no business to be near you—none whatever. I should not have gone to the theatre; I ought to have staid at home, and spent the time in thinking of you—why shouldn’t I say it, now that you have been so frank with me? You and I know each other pretty well, do we not? There is no reason, surely, why we may not regard each other as friends, whatever may happen. And why should I not tell you that I fear to go down to St. Mary-Kirby, and meet that poor Dove who has given me her heart?”

She said nothing: what could she say? It was not for her to blame him.

“And when I went to the theatre, I said ‘it is the last time!’ I could not help going. I did not intend to meet you when you came out.”

“You did not?” she said.

There was, despite herself, a touch of disappointment in her tone. The strange joyous light that had passed over her face on seeing him was the result of a sudden thought that he loved her so well that he was forced to come to her.

“No,” he answered, “I did not intend to meet you; but the sudden pleasure of seeing you was so great that I had not the heart to refuse to come into the cab. And now you know my secret, you may blame me as you please. I suppose I am weaker than other men; but I did not err willfully. And now the thing is done, it is Dove whom I most consider. How can I go to her with a lie in every word, and look, and action? Or how could I tell her the truth? Whichever way one turns there is nothing but sadness and misery.”

And still there was no word from the young girl opposite.

“I have not even the resource of blaming destiny,” he continued. “I must blame my own blindness. Only you, looking at these things in your friendly and kindly way, will not blame me further for having indulged myself a last time in going to see you to-night. You will never have to complain again—never; and indeed I went to-night in a manner to bid you good-bye—so you won’t be hard on me.”

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He was surprised to see, by the gleam of the lamp they passed, that the girl was covertly sobbing, and that the large soft eyes were full of tears. At the same moment, however, the cabman pulled up at the corner of the little square in which Annie Bruel lived; and so they both got out. When Will turned from paying the cabman, she had walked on a bit in advance, and had not entered the square. He overtook her, and offered her his arm. The night was fine and still; a large, lambent planet lay like a golden bell-flower in the soft purple before them, and a large harvest-moon, bronzed and discolored, glimmered through the tall elms on the other side of the way, as it slowly rose up from the horizon.

“I have something to say to you,” he heard the soft, low voice say, “which I had hoped never to have said. It is better it should be said.”

“If you have cause to blame me, or if you wish to prevent my seeing you again by upbraiding me for having spoken honestly to you, I beg of you to say nothing that way. It is not needed. You will run no danger whatever of being annoyed again. I blame myself more than you can; and since we must part, let us part friends, with a kindly recollection of each other.”

“Don’t speak like that!” she said, imploringly, with another convulsive sob, “or you will break my heart. Is it not enough that—that—oh! I can not, can not tell you, and yet I must tell you!”

“What have you to tell me?” he said, with a cold feeling creeping over him. He began to suspect what her emotion meant; and he shrank from the suggestion as from some great evil he had himself committed.

“You will think me shameless; I can not help it. You say this is our last meeting; and I can not bear to have you go away from me with the thought that you have to suffer alone. You think I ought to give you my sympathy, because I am your friend, and you will not be happy. But—but I will suffer too; and I am a woman—and alone—and whom have I to look to—?”

He stopped her, and looked down into her face.

“Annie, is this true?” he said, sadly and gravely.

He got no answer beyond the sight of her streaming eyes and quivering lips.

“Then are we the two wretchedest of God’s creatures,” he said.

“Ah, don’t say that,” she murmured, venturing to look up at him through her tears. “Should we not be glad to know that we can think kindly of each other, without shame? Unhappy, yes!—but surely not the very wretchedest of all. And you won’t misunderstand me? You won’t think, afterward, that it was because I was an actress that I confessed this to you.”

Even in such a moment a touch of Bohemi-

anism!—a fear that her mother's profession should suffer by her weakness.

"Dearest," he said, tenderly, "for you are, God help me! my very, very dearest—we now know each other too well to have to make excuses for our confidence in each other."

They walked on now quite silently; there was too much for both of them to think about to admit of speech. As they walked southward, down the long and sombre thoroughfares, the large moon on their left slowly rose, and still rose, at every minute losing its copper color and gaining in clear, full light. They knew not whither they were going. There was no passer-by to stare at them; they were alone in the world, with the solitary houses, and the great moon.

"You have not told me a minute too soon," he said, suddenly, with a strange exultation in his tone.

"What do you mean?"

"You and I, Annie, love each other. If the future is to be taken from us, let us recompense ourselves *now*. When you walk back to your house to-night, and the door closes, you and I see each other no more. To-morrow, and all the to-morrows after that, we are only strangers. But for the next half-hour—my dearest, my dearest! show me your face and let me see what your eyes say!—why should we not forget all these coming days and live that half-hour for ourselves? It is but a little time; the sweetness of it will be a memory to us. Let us be lovers, Annie!—only for this little time we shall be together, my dearest! Let us try to imagine that you and I are to be married to-morrow—that all the coming years we are to be together—that now we have nothing to do but to yield ourselves up to our love."

"I am afraid," she said, in a low voice, trembling.

"Why afraid, then?"

"That afterward the recollection will be too bitter."

"Darling, nothing that you can imagine is likely to be more bitter than what you and I must bear. Just now, we have a little time of our own; let us forget what is to come, and—"

"Whisper, then," she said.

He bent down his head to her, and she came close to his ear.

"Will, I love you, and if I could I would be your wife to-morrow."

"And you will kiss me, too," he said.

He felt a slight, warm touch on his lips; and when he raised his head his face was quite white, and his eyes were wild.

"Why, we *are* to be married to-morrow!" he said. "It will be about eleven when I reach the church, and I shall walk up and down between the empty pews until you come—I see the whole thing now—you walking in at the door with your friends, your dear eyes a little frightened, looking at me as if you wanted me to take you away at once from among the people. Then we shall be off, dearest, sharp and fast, up to your

house; you will hurry to change your things, and then, with a good-bye to every body, we are off, we two, you and I, Annie, away anywhere, so that we may be alone together. And I wish to God, Annie, that you and I were lying down there, beneath that water, dead and drowned!"

They had come to the river—the broad, smooth river, with the wonderful breadths of soft light upon it, and the dark olive-green shadows of the sombre wharves and buildings on the other side.

"Will, Will, you frighten me so!" she said, clinging to his arm.

"You needn't be frightened," he said sadly. "I am only telling you what might happen. Can't you see all these things when you try to see them? For many a night past—ever since the evening we spent overlooking the Rhine—I have seen that marriage-scene before my eyes, and it is always you who are there. You remember that evening when you sat up in the balcony, among the vine leaves, with the moon hanging up over the river? There's a German song I once heard that warns you never to go near the Rhine, because life is too sweet there; and we have been there, and have received the curse of this discontent and undying regret."

Then he broke out into a bitter laugh.

"We were to be lovers; and this is pretty lovers' talk."

"You really do frighten me, Will," she said. "I never saw you look so before. Oh, my dear, don't be so very, very sad and despairing, for I have nothing to comfort you with—not even one poor word; and it seems so wretched that we two should not be able to comfort each other."

He was fighting with the bonds of circumstance; and his impotence embittered him. The spectacle of these two wretched creatures—despairing, rebellious, and driven almost beyond the bounds of reason by their perplexity—walking along the side of the still and peaceful stream, was one to have awakened the compassion, or at least the sympathetic merriment of the most careless of the gods. What a beautiful night it was! The deep olive shadows of the moonlight hid away the ragged and tawdry buildings that overhung the river; and the flood of yellow-tinged light touched only here and there on the edge of a bank or the stem of a tree, and then fell gently on the broad bosom of the stream. The gas-lamps of the nearest bridge glimmered palely in that white light; but deep in the shadows along the river the lamps burned strong and red, and sent long, quivering lines of fire down into the dark water beneath. Farther up the stream lay broad swaths of moonlight, vague and indeterminate as the gray continents visible in the world of silver overhead. In all this universe of peace, and quiet, and harmony, there seemed to be only these two beings restless, embittered, and hopeless.

"Let us go home," he said, with an effort. "I can do nothing but frighten you and myself too. I tell you there are other things pass before my eyes as well as the marriage-scene, and I

don't want to see any more of them. It will be time enough to think of what may happen when it does happen."

"And whatever happens, Will, shall we not at least know that we sometimes—occasionally—think tenderly of each other?"

"So you wish us to be lovers still!" he said. "The delusion is too difficult to keep up. Have you reflected that when once I am married, neither of us may think of each other at all?"

"Will! Will! don't talk like that? You speak as if somebody had cruelly injured you, and you were angry and revengeful. Nobody has done it. It is only our misfortune. It can not be helped. If I am not to think of you—and I shall pray God to help me to forget you—so much the better."

"My poor darling!" he said, "I am so selfish that I think less of what your future may be than of my own. You dare not confide your secret to any one; and I, who know it, must not see you nor try to comfort you. Is not the very confidence that prompted you to tell me, a proof that we are—that we might have been happy as husband and wife?"

"Husband and wife," she repeated, musingly, as they once more drew near home. "You will be a husband, but I shall never be a wife."

"And yet, so long as you and I live," he said, quite calmly, "you will have my whole love. It can not be otherwise: we need not seek to conceal it. Whatever happens, and wherever we may be, my love goes with you."

"And if mine," she whispered, "could go with you, and watch over you, and teach your heart to do right, it would lead your love back to the poor girl whom you are going to marry, and make her happy."

At parting he kissed her tenderly, almost solemnly. Then she quickly undid from her neck a little brooch, and put it in his hand with these words:

"Give that to her, with my love, *and with yours.*"

CHAPTER XXV.

EVIL TIDINGS.

VERY early did Dove get up that cool September morning. Away down the valley there lay a faintly-yellow haze, which made one feel that the sun was behind it, and would soon drink it up. In the mean time the grass was wet. A birch-tree that almost touched her bedroom window had its drooping branches of shivering leaves glistening with moisture. The willows along the river-side were almost hid. The withered and red chestnut leaves which floated on the pond had a cold autumn look about them. Then old Thwaites, the keeper, appeared, with a pointer and a curly black retriever; and when the old man went into the meadow to knock down some walnuts from the trees, his breath was visible in the damp, thick atmosphere. She saw these things vaguely; she only knew with

certainly that the sunlight and Will were coming.

A hundred times she made up her mind as to the mood in which she ought to receive him. Indeed, for weeks back she had done nothing but mentally rehearse that meeting; and every scene that she described to herself was immediately afterward abandoned.

She was hurt, she knew; and in her secret heart she longed to— No! he had been very neglectful about letters, and she would— But in the mean time it was important, whatever rôle she might assume, that she should look as pretty as possible.

This was all her immediate care—a care that had awoke her an hour too soon. But if she had changed her mind about the manner in which she should receive him, how much more about the costume which was to add effect to the scene? Every detail—every little ornament, and bit of ribbon, and dexterous fold, she studied, and altered, and studied and altered again, until she was very nearly losing temper and wishing that people had been born to look their best without the necessity of clothing themselves.

Perhaps one might be allowed to make a parenthetical remark about those ladies who, dressing for a ball or the theatre, imagine that the less they clothe themselves the better they look. It is merely a question of the relative artistic value of certain surfaces. And, as a general rule, it may be accepted that the natural complexion of women's shoulders is inferior in fineness of hue and texture to the same extent of white satin or dove-colored silk.

Down-stairs she went. Mr. Anerley was engaged in turning in the edge of his cartridges, and had succeeded in vigorously scratching the marble mantelpiece with the machine he was using.

"Good-morning, papa."

She was very much embarrassed, she did not know why. She hoped he would not look at her; but he did, and kissed her, and returned to his work.

"Dear me," he said "that I, an old man, should have received such a compliment! A young lady getting up at a prodigiously early hour, and dressing herself in her very smartest way, in order to come down and make my breakfast!"

"Shall I pour out your coffee now, papa?" she said, with a great blush.

"Yes, you may, my dear. But don't put anchovy into it instead of cream. I make the suggestion because I see you are a little disturbed. It is the early rising, or the chill of the autumn, or the remembrance of last Sunday's sermon, I dare say."

She did not speak a word, but placed the coffee at his end of the table, and returned to her seat. When he had finished his cartridge-making he sat down, and, as a preliminary to breakfast, swallowed a mouthful of the coffee. The next moment there was an exclamation of horror—he ran to the sideboard, seized a bottle of

hock that had been left from yesterday's dinner, hurriedly filled a coffee-cup with the wine, and drank off the contents—his face all the while in contortions. Dove sat silent and willful, with a smile on her lips, and a hot flush on her cheeks. She would neither look at him nor speak to him.

"Cayenne pepper!" he gasped, taking another gulp of the cold Rhine wine.

She only played with her teaspoon.

"You might have killed me, you malicious creature!" he cried, amid intervals of coughing. "Cayenne! Well, don't suppose that you would have got much out of my life insurance!"

At this she rose and walked to the door, proud, spiteful, half laughing and half crying.

"You had no business to tease me," she said.

"Come here, Dove," he said, taking her by the arm and leading her back; "do you know what the effect of Cayenne is on the human throat?"

"I don't care."

"I say you might have killed me."

"I don't care."

"Now, if I were a young man I should probably be proud of such a mark of your favor, but—"

"It served you right. I can't bear people to talk to me like that, and you always do it, papa, you know you do."

"But as I am an old man, I mean to have my revenge. Firstly, there shall be no dog-cart or other vehicle leave this house this day for Horton station. Secondly, should any guest arrive, he will be asked to follow me over to the East Meadows, where I shall be shooting. Thirdly, should that guest dine with us, he will be confined to the dining-room during the entire evening, and any person waiting in the drawing-room may play the 'Coulin,' or such music as they prefer, for their own benefit. Fourthly—"

"Fourthly, none of these things will happen," said Dove, with a touch of contempt in her tone.

And Dove was right. For she herself was driven in the dog-cart over to Horton station, and she took care to make the man start half an hour before the proper time. The station-master, then and now one of the civillest of men, endeavored to relieve the tedium of waiting by chatting to her; but she only half listened to him, and talked nonsense in reply.

She walked about the station, stared up the long perspective of narrowing lines, then walked in again to the small waiting-room, and wondered why the people about did not bestir themselves to receive the coming train. Then, with a flutter of the heart, she saw the signals changed, and presently there was a far-off noise which told of Will's approach. For he had written from Paris to say that unless they got other notice from him, he would be down by this particular train.

A railway-station is not the proper place for a piece of acting. Scenes of the most tender and tragic kind—never to be forgotten—have been witnessed there; but the gentle drawing-room comedies with which lovers amuse themselves do not harmonize with the rough-and-

ready accessories of a railway-line. Dove resolved to leave her proper reception of Will until they should be in the house together; at present it was to be nothing but a hurried, delicious kissing, scrambling after luggage, and swift getting home.

There was no head thrust out from one of the approaching carriages—no handkerchief waved. She did not know which of the dull, dark, and heavy carriages might not have him inside; but she was sure he could not escape her at the station.

The train stopped, the guard bustled about, the people descended from the carriages, the porters looked out for luggage and sixpences. With a half-realized fear—a dread of some vague evil—Dove glanced quickly along the people, then more narrowly; finally she turned to the carriages. The doors were again shut; the guard blew his whistle, and leisurely stepped into his box; and the train moved slowly out of the station. There was no Will Anerley there.

Sick at heart she turned away. It was a cruel disappointment: for weeks she had been planning the whole scene, she had dreamt of the meeting, had thought of it during the drowsy hush of the Sunday-morning sermon, had looked forward to it as the crowning compensation for the microscopic troubles of her daily life. There was not even a letter to say that he was in England; perhaps he was still in France.

So she went home, vexed, and disappointed, and sad. Mr. Anerley was out shooting; Mrs. Anerley soothingly said that doubtless Will would be down by a later train; and then Dove went away into a corner of the drawing-room, and plunged herself into a volume of old music, turning over the leaves and supping a surfeit of sad memories.

Before going to the train that morning Will had found it necessary to call upon a doctor. From him he learned, firstly, that the original dressing of the wounds in his arm had been far from satisfactory; and secondly, that owing to some disturbant cause renewed inflammation had set in. Indeed, the doctor gave him to understand that only prompt attention and great care could prevent the wounds assuming a very serious aspect.

"Your arm must have suffered some violence quite recently," said the doctor.

"Well, last night," said Will, "I knocked a man down with my left arm, and very likely I instinctively twitched up the right to guard myself."

"These are little amusements which a man in your condition had better forego," said the other, quietly. "The best thing you can do is to go home and get to bed, give your arm perfect rest, and I will call in the afternoon and see what is to be done."

"I can't do that," said Will, "I'm going down to the country."

"You will do so at your peril."

"All the same, I must go. Nothing is likely to happen between to-day and Monday. If you

had seen the leg I had in Turkey.—without any doctor but a servant who could not even infuse our tea—constant rain—walking every day—our tent letting in water at night—”

“I don’t know about your leg in Turkey,” said the doctor, tartly, “but I see the condition in which your arm is now. If you think it will get well by exposing it to rain, well and good—”

“Can you do any thing to it *now*?”

“No, unless you give the limb perfect rest.”

“Very well. If it gets very bad, I shall come up to town to-morrow. If not, I shall visit you on Monday, and do every thing you tell me then.”

He got into a cab and drove back to his chambers. The man had already taken his portmanteau down stairs, when Count Schönstein’s brougham drove up, and the Count jumped out.

“Where are you going?”

“To St. Mary-Kirby.”

“Not now. Come inside. I have something to tell you.”

They stepped inside: never before had Will observed the Count to be so disturbed.

“Miall and Welling,” he said, hurriedly, “I have just heard—not ten minutes ago—have collapsed—the announcement will be made to-day—the directors were in the place till twelve last night. It will be the most fearful crash, they say; for the bank has lately been making the wildest efforts to save itself—”

“I thought Miall and Welling’s was as safe as the Bank of England,” said Will—just a trifle pale.

Every farthing of his father’s money was in this bank, which had never even been suspected in the most general crises.

“It may be only a rumor,” continued the Count. “But you may as well wait, to see if the evening papers have any thing about it.”

“It will be a pretty story to carry down with me to Kent,” said Will.

“That’s what I was thinking of,” said the Count, kindly—indeed he was not wholly a selfish man; “and I thought I might go down with you, if you liked, and try to help your father over the first shock. It will be a terrible blow to him—a man who has lived a quiet and easy life, with a little hunting, and shooting, and so on. I shouldn’t wonder if it entirely upset him and did some harm—”

“You don’t know my father,” said Will.

They had not to wait for the evening papers. By twelve o’clock the news was current in the city. Miall and Welling had sent out their circular: the bank had suspended payment.

This was the cause of Will’s missing the train. When he took his seat in the next train going down, it was with a feeling that now ill-fortune had done its worst, and there was nothing more to encounter. He thought of that wild scene of last night by the banks of the river—of the strange, sad, unfathomable look of the young actress’s eyes—of their bitter parting, and the tender words she spoke as he left. Then he look-

ed forward to meeting Dove with a cold fear at his heart; and he was almost glad that the more immediate and terrible business he had on hand would distract his attention.

He left his portmanteau at the station, and walked round to the brow of the hill. Before him lay the well known-valley, still and silent under the yellow autumn sunlight; and down there by the river he saw a tall, spare man—accompanied by another man and a couple of dogs—whose figure he easily recognized. He walked in that direction, crossing the low-lying meadows and the river, and rounding a bit of coppice which skirted a turnip-field.

As he turned the corner, a covey of birds rose just in front of him, with a prodigious whirr of wings.

“Mark!” he called, instinctively, though he was quite unaware of the proximity of any body with a gun.

The next second there was a double report; two of the birds came tumbling down, scattering their feathers in the air, and there was a muttered admonition to the pointer. A few steps farther brought him into view of Mr. Anerley and old Thwaites, both of whom were marking down the remaining birds of the covey, as the low, swift, sailing flight seemed to near the ground.

“Why did you come round that way?” said Mr. Anerley when he saw his son. “I might have shot you.”

“I shouldn’t have minded, sir,” said Will. “I’m getting used to it.”

“You have your arm in a sling yet? I thought it was all right.”

“The doctor pulls long faces over it. I fancy the man in the Black Forest bungled it.”

“If the Black Foresters don’t know how to cure men shot by mistake, they ought to,” said Mr. Anerley, with a thoroughly English contempt for any kind of shooting but his own. “Such a set of sparrow-shooting shoemakers I never saw. I suppose I needn’t offer you my gun?”

“No, thank you. I’ll walk down the turnips with you, on my way to the house.”

There was little left in the turnips, however. A solitary bird got up, almost out of shot, and Mr. Anerley knocked him over very cleverly. There was no smile of triumph, however, on the firm-set lips of the tall, keen-faced, gray-haired sportsman. He quietly put another cartridge into the barrel and walked on, occasionally growling at the dog, which was continually making false points. Almost at the end of the turnips the dog made a very decided point.

“Ware lark! gr-r-r!” cried old Thwaites, and at the same instant a fine covey of birds, startled by the cry, got up out of shot. The dog had really been on the scent of the partridges.

Mr. Anerley said nothing, but he did not look particularly pleased.

“If that had not been old Thwaites,” muttered Will, “I should have said it was an old fool.”

So Will walked on to Chestnut Bank. He

had not the heart to tear the old man away from his favorite sport in order to give him this bad news. After dinner, he now thought, would be time enough; and he himself seemed to have gained a respite until then.

But if he was in the mean while relieved from the necessity of bearing the evil tidings to his father, there remained his meeting with Dove, which he had for long looked forward to with a half-conscious fear. As he drew near the house, he began to think this the greater trial of the two.

Dove, still sitting in the drawing-room, heard footsteps on the gravelled pathway leading down through the garden. The music almost dropped from her hands as she listened intently for a moment—then a flush of joyous color stole over her face. But, all the same, she opened the book again, and sat obstinately looking at pages which she did not see.

"Dove," said Will, tapping at the French window, "open and let me in."

No answer—Dove still intently regarding the music.

So he had to go on to the hall-door, ring the bell, and enter the drawing-room from the passage.

"Oh, you are come back again!" said Dove, with mimic surprise, and with admirably simulated carelessness.

She held out her hand to him. She fancied he would be dreadfully astonished and perturbed by this cold reception—that they would have a nice little quarrel, and an explanation, and all the divine joys of making-up, before Mrs. Anerley could come down from the apple-closet, in which she had been engaged since breakfast-time. But, on the contrary, Will was neither surprised nor disturbed. He looked quite grave, perhaps a little sad, and took her hand, saying kindly:

"Yes, back again. I hope you have been well while I was away, Dove; and that you amused yourself."

Dove was alarmed. He had not even offered to kiss her.

"What is the matter with you, Will?" she said, with a vague fear in her pretty violet eyes.

"Why, nothing much."

"Is it I, then? Are you vexed with me, that you should be so cold with me after being away so long a time?"

There she stood, with her eyes downcast, a troubled look on her face, and both her hands pulling to pieces a little engraving she held.

"Why should I be vexed with you, Dove?" he said, putting his hand on her shoulder. He dared not kiss her: there dwelt on his lips yet the memory of that sad leave-taking of the night before.

"Then why are you and I standing here like strangers?" she said, stamping her little foot.

She could not tell how things had all gone wrong; but they had gone wrong; and the meeting she had looked forward to with such pleasurable anticipation was an embarrassing failure.

At this moment Mrs. Anerley entered, and the girl saw her receive the kiss which had been denied to herself.

"You are not looking well, Will," said the observant mother. "Is your arm healing rightly?"

"Oh, yes, well enough."

"You are fatigued, then. Let me bring you some sherry."

She left the room, and then Dove—looking hesitatingly for a moment—ran forward to him, and buried her face in his bosom, and burst into tears.

"It was all my fault, dear," she sobbed. "I wanted to be angry with you for not coming down by the first train—and—and I thought you would pet me, and make it up, you know—and I even forgot to ask about your arm; but it wasn't, dear, because I didn't think of it—"

"There, it's all right," he said. "I didn't notice you were vexed with me, or I should have made friends with you at once. There, now, you're only ruffling all your pretty hair, and such a delicate little collar you've got!"

"Oh!" she said, with smiles breaking through her tears, "you don't know what I have been making for you."

"Tell me."

"Twenty times I was near telling you in my letters; but I stopped. I tried to get it done to give it you to-day, but I couldn't; and—and perhaps it was that made me vexed with you."

"Very likely," said Will, who thoroughly understood the charming byways of Dove's logic.

"It is a worsted waistcoat," she said, in a solemn whisper, "all knitted by myself. And I've put in some of my hair, so that you never could see it unless I showed it to you. They say that to give any one some of your hair is so unlucky—that it always means parting; but I couldn't help putting in just a little."

"To represent a little parting—from Saturday to Monday, for example."

"Are you going up to town again to-morrow?" she said with fresh alarm.

"The doctor says I ought; but we shall see when to-morrow comes."

So peace was established between them. It was only as an afterthought she remembered that he had never once kissed her.

During dinner Will was almost silent. They supposed he was tired with the journey home. When Mrs. Anerley and Dove had left the room, he knew the time was come.

"I have bad news for you, father," he said.

"Out with it, then," said Mr. Anerley. "Every body in the house is well in health; any thing else does not much matter."

"Miall and Welling are down."

The old man put back his wine-glass on the table.

"Miall and Welling's bank is down?" he said, slowly.

"Yes."

"Are you sure of it?"

"There is their circular."

He read the paper carefully, and laid it down. "They say," said Will, "that their affairs are in a terrible plight—quite hopeless."

"That means that I have not a farthing of money beyond what is in the house."

He remained silent for several minutes, his eyes fixed on the table before him. Then he said:

"Very well. There are four of us. If we two men can not support ourselves and these two women, should not every one have a right to laugh at us?"

"But that you, at your age—"

"My age? I am in the prime of life. Indeed, it is time I did something to show that I could have earned my own bread all along."

"I'm glad you look at it in that way," said Will, rather sadly. "Here am I, unable to earn a penny until my arm gets better. You know nothing specially of any business—"

"It is not too late to learn, my lad. There are plenty of things to which I could turn my hand. Imagine what a capital keeper I should be; and how I should overawe the trembling Cockneys invited down to a grand battue into giving me monstrous tips! Now let us look at the thing in another light."

He straightened himself up, as if throwing some weight off his shoulders. Then he relapsed into his old manner, and there was a sort of sad smile on his face.

"Edmond About," he said, "declares that all men are producers, and have, therefore, a right to the property they possess, except robbers, beggars, and gamblers. Doubtless the money I possessed was very valuable to the people to whom I lent it, and they paid me for putting its working powers at their disposal. You understand?"

"Yes."

"I was, in that sense, a producer, and had a right to the money on which I lived. M. About tells me that I had. But, in spite of that, I was always bothered by an uneasy conviction that the ancestor of mine who brought the money into the family could not have made it by his own hands. Indeed, I am convinced that my rich progenitor—who, let us say, came over with William—was nothing else than a prodigious thief, who either stole money in the shape of taxes, or the means of making money in the shape of land, from the people who then owned it. I therefore, you see, have no right to the possession of money acquired by robbery."

"You only discover that when the money is gone," said Will, accustomed to his father's philosophic and easy way of taking things.

"Not at all. I have for some time back been proud to class myself among the richest and oldest families of England, in regard to the moral shadiness of our right to live on the produce of gigantic thievery. You see—"

"I see, sir, that the moment you lose your money, you become a philosophic Radical."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Anerley, sending a sigh after his vanished riches, "I don't think the misfortune has touched us much, when we can trans-

fer it into the region of first principles. Perhaps I had better go up to town with you to-morrow and see what practical issues it must lead to."

"And in the mean time," said Will, "don't tell either of the women."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COUNT'S CHANCE.

"WHERE is Mr. Melton?" asked the Count.

"Up in the 'flies,' sir, I believe," said the prompter. "Shall I send for him?"

"No, I shall go up to him," said the Count.

It was on the evening of the day on which he had told Will of Miall and Welling's downfall. After having ascertained the truth of the report, he had gone to spend the remainder of the day at his club, in talking, reading, and dining; and when he did think of going round to the theatre, he found that the piece in which Annie Brunel played would be over and she gone home. This was as he wished.

So he made his way up the well-worn wooden steps until he reached the "flies," where he found Mr. Melton seated on the drum which rolled up the drop-scene, in earnest talk with a carpenter. On seeing the Count, the man walked away, and Mr. Melton rose.

"Welcome back to England," said the manager, rather nervously. "I have been most anxious to see you."

"Ah!" said the Count.

"Indeed the strangest thing has happened—completely floored me—never heard the like—" continued Mr. Melton, hurriedly. "Have you seen Miss Brunel?"

"No," said the Count.

"Not since you returned?"

"No."

"You are not acquainted with her resolution?"

"No."

"Then let me tell you what happened not half an hour ago in this very theatre. You see that scenery? It's all new. The dresses are new, new music, new decorations, a new theatre, and—d—n it all—it's enough to make a man mad!"

"But what is it?" asked the Count of the abnormally excited manager.

"A few minutes ago Miss Brunel comes to me and says, 'Mr. Melton, a word with you.'

"Certainly," said I.

"Then she turned a little pale; and had that curious look in her eyes that she used to wear on the stage, you know; and said clearly, 'I am not going to act any more.'

"When I had recovered breath, I said,

"Pardon me, Miss Brunel, you must. Look at the expense I have been put to in getting up this revival—"

"And then she grew excited, as if she were half mad, and implored me not to compel her to fulfill her engagement. She said her acting was

a failure; that every body knew it was a failure; that she had an invincible repugnance to going on the stage again, and that nothing would tempt her to begin a new piece, either with me or with any body else. I can assure you, Count Schönstein, now that I think over it, there never was a finer scene in any play than she acted then—with her despair, and her appeals, and her determination. I thought at first she was bewitched; and then I declare she was so nearly on the point of bewitching me that I was almost agreeing to every thing she asked, only—

"Only what?"

"Only I remembered that the theatre was not wholly my own affair, and that I had no business to compromise its interests by—you understand?"

"Quite right—quite right," said the Count, hastily. "And then—"

"Then she left."

"But what—what is the reason of her wishing to leave the stage?"

"I don't know."

"Had she heard any—any news, for example?"

"I don't know."

"Why, Melton, what a fellow you are!" cried the Count, peevishly. "I'm sure you could easily have found out, if you cared, what she meant by it."

"I tell you I was quite dumbfounded—"

"And she said nothing about any news—or her prospects—or a change—"

"Nothing. From what she said, I gathered that she had come to dislike acting, and that she was convinced her future career would be wretched both for herself and the house. You have never asked me about the theatre at all. The first two or three nights the curiosity of people to see her in the new part gave us some good business; but now the papers have changed their tune, and the public—"

Mr. Melton shrugged his shoulders; but Count Schönstein was paying no attention to him.

If she has discovered the secret, he was reasoning with himself, she would be in no such desperate hurry to leave the stage. If she has not, now is the time for me.

"Melton," he said, "what would be a reasonable forfeit if she broke her engagement?"

"I don't know. I should say £200. She said she could not offer me compensation in money, and that's why she begged so hard of me for the favor. God knows, if I could afford it, and were my own master, I should not make the poor creature keep to her engagement. Look at the money she used to put into the treasury every week."

"Very good. Come down-stairs to your room. I want to transact some business with you."

When they had gone down to the stage and passed through the wings to Mr. Melton's private room, both men sat down in front of a table on which were writing materials.

"Take a sheet of paper, like a good fellow," said the Count, "and write to my dictation."

Melton took the pen in his hand, and the Count continued—

"My dear Miss Brunel, in consideration of your past services, and of the great success attending—should that be attendant, Melton?—upon your previous labors in this theatre, I beg to offer you entire liberty to break your present engagement, at whatever time you please. Yours sincerely, Charles Melton."

"And what do you propose to do with that, Count?" said Melton, with a smile.

"I propose to give you this bit of paper for it," said the Count.

He handed the manager an I O U for £200; and then carefully folded up the letter and put it in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DOUBTFUL.

WITHOUT taking off either bonnet or cloak, Annie Brunel, on reaching home that night, went at once to Mrs. Christmas's room, and flung herself down on the edge of the bed where the poor old woman lay, ailing and languid.

"Oh, mother, mother," cried the girl, "I can never go to the theatre any more!"

She buried her face in the bed-clothes, and only stretched out her hand for sympathy. The old woman tried to put her arm round the girl's neck, but relinquished the attempt with a sigh.

"What is to become of us, Miss Annie?"

"I don't know—I don't know," she said, almost wildly, "and why should I care any longer?"

"What new trouble is this that has fallen on us?" said Mrs. Christmas, faintly. "Why do you speak like that?"

"Because I don't know what to say, mother—because I would rather die than go to the theatre again—and he says I must. I can not go—I can not go—and there is no one to help me!"

The old woman turned her eyes—and they looked large in the shrivelled and weakly face—on her companion.

"Annie, you won't tell me what is the matter. Why should you hate the stage? Hasn't it been kind to you? Wasn't it kind to your mother—for many a long year, when she and you depended on it for your lives? The stage is a kind home for many a poor creature whom the world has cast out—and you, Miss Annie, who have been in a theatre all your life, what has taken you now? The newspapers?"

The girl only shook her head.

"Because the business isn't good?"

No answer.

"Has Mr. Melton been saying any thing—"

"I tell you, mother," said the girl, passionately, "that I will not go upon the stage, because I hate it! And I hate the people—I hate them for staring at me, and making me ashamed of myself. I hate them because they are rich, and happy, and full of their own concerns—indeed, mother, I can't tell you—I only know that I will

never go on the stage again, let them do what they like. Oh, to feel their eyes on me, and to know that I am only there for their amusement, and to know that I can not compel them to—to any thing but sit and compassionately admire my dress and my efforts to please them. I can't bear it, Lady Jane, I can't bear it."

And here she broke out into a fit of hysterical sobbing.

"My poor dear, when I should be strong and ready to comfort you, here I am weaker and more helpless than yourself. But don't go back to the theatre, sweetheart, until your taste for it returns—"

"It will never return. I hate the thought of it."

"But it may. And in the mean time haven't we over £40 in the house of good savings?"

"That is nothing to what I must undertake to give Mr. Melton if I break my engagement. But I don't mind that much, Lady Jane—I don't mind any thing except going back there, and you must never ask me to go back. Say that you won't! We shall get along somehow—"

"My darling, how can you imagine I would seek to send you back?"

Annie Brunel did not sleep much that night; but by the morning she had recovered all her wonted courage and self-composure. Indeed, it was with a new and singular sense of freedom and cheerfulness that she rose to find the world before her, her own path through it as yet uncertain and full of risks. But she was now mistress of herself; she went to bid Mrs. Christmas good-morning with a blithe air, and then, as every Englishwoman does under such circumstances, she sent for the *Times*.

She had no definite impression about her capabilities for earning her living out of the dramatic profession; but she expected to find all the requisite suggestions in the *Times*. Here was column after column of proffered employment; surely one little bit might be allotted to her. So she sat down hopefully before the big sheet, and proceeded to put a well-defined cross opposite each advertisement which she imagined offered her a fair chance.

While she was thus engaged, Count Schönstein's brougham was announced; and a few minutes thereafter, the Count, having sent up his card, was permitted to enter the room.

Outwardly his appearance was elaborate, and he wore a single deep crimson rose in the lapel of his tightly-buttoned frock-coat. His eyes, however, were a little anxious. And it was soon apparent that he had for the present relinquished his grand manner.

"I am delighted to see you looking so well," he said, "and I hope Mrs. Christmas is also the better for her holiday—"

"Poor Lady Jane is very ill," said Miss Brunel, "though she will scarcely admit it."

"Have I disturbed your political studies?" he asked, looking at the open newspaper.

"I have been reading the advertisements of situations," she said, frankly.

"Not, I hope," he remarked, "with any reference to what I heard from Mr. Melton last night about your retiring from the stage?"

"Indeed it is from no other cause," she said, cheerfully. "I have resolved not to play any more; but we can not live without my doing something—"

"In the mean time," said the Count, drawing a letter from his pocket, "I have much pleasure in handing you this note from Mr. Melton. You will find that it releases you from your present engagement, whenever you choose to avail yourself of the power."

The young girl's face was lit up with a sudden glow of happiness and gratitude.

"How can I ever thank him for this great kindness," she said,—"so unexpected, so generous. Indeed, I must go and see him and thank him personally—it is the greatest kindness I have received for years."

The Count was a little puzzled.

"You understand, Miss Brunel, that—that paper, you see, was not quite Mr. Melton's notion until—"

"Until you asked him? Then I am indebted to you for many kindnesses, but for this more than all. I feel as if you had given me a pair of wings. How shall I ever thank you sufficiently—"

"*By becoming my wife.*"

He had nearly uttered the words; but he did not. He felt that his mission that morning was too serious to be risked without the most cautious introduction. Besides, she was in far too good spirits to have such a suggestion made to her. He felt instinctively that, in her present mood, she would certainly laugh at him—the most frightful catastrophe that can happen to a man under the circumstances. And Count Schönstein had sufficient acquaintance with actresses to know that while they have the most astonishing capacity for emotion, if their sympathies be properly excited, there are no people who, in cold blood, can so accurately detect the ridiculous in a man's exterior. An actress in love forgets every thing but her love; an actress not in love has the cruellest eye for the oddities or defects of figure and costume.

At the present moment, Count Schönstein felt sure that if he spoke of love, and marriage, and so forth, Miss Brunel would be looking at the rose in his button-hole, or scanning his stiff necktie and collar, or the unblushing corpulence of his waist. In his heart he wished he had no rose in his button-hole.

It would be very easy to make fun of this poor Count (and he was aware of the fact himself) as he stood there, irresolute, diffident, anxious. But there was something almost pathetic as well as comic, in his position. Consider how many vague aspirations were now concentrated upon this visit. Consider how he had thought about it as he had dressed himself many a morning, as he had gone to bed many a night; how, with a strange sort of loyalty, he had striven to exalt his motives and persuade himself that he

was quite disinterested; how the dull pursuit of his life, position and influence had been tinged with a glow of sentiment and romance by meeting this young girl.

"She has no friends," he said to himself, many a time, "neither have I. Why should not we make common cause against the indifference and hauteur of society? I can make a good husband—I would yield in all things to her wishes. And away down in Kent together—we two—even if we should live only for each other—"

The Count tried hard to keep this view of the matter before his eyes. When sometimes his errant imagination would picture his marriage with the poor actress—then his claim, on behalf of his wife, for the estates and title of the Marquis of Knottingley's daughter, then the surprise, the chatter of the clubs, the position in society he would assume, the money he would have at his command, the easy invitations to *battues* he could dispense like as many worthless coppers among the young lords and venerable baronets—and so forth, and so forth—he dwelt upon the prospect with an unholy and ashamed delight, and strove to banish it from his mind as a temptation of the devil.

These conflicting motives, and the long train of anticipations connected with them, only served to render his present situation the more tragic. He knew that one great crisis of his life had come; and it is not only incomparable heroes, possessed of all human graces and virtues, who meet with such crises.

"When do you propose to leave the stage?" he asked.

"I have left," she answered.

"You won't play to-night?"

"No."

"But Mr. Melton—"

"Since he has been so kind as to give me, at your instigation, this release, must get Miss Featherstone to play 'Rosalind.' Nelly will play it very nicely, and my best wishes will go with her."

"Then I must see him instantly," said the Count, "and give him notice to get a handbill printed."

"If you would be so kind—"

But this was too bad. She intimated by her manner that she expected him to leave at once merely for the sake of the wretched theatre. He took up the newspaper, by way of excuse, and for a minute or two glanced down its columns.

"Have you any fixed plans about what you mean to do?" he asked.

"None whatever," she replied. "Indeed I am in no hurry. You have no idea how I love this sense of freedom you have just given me, and I mean to enjoy it for a little time."

"But after then?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and smiled; he thought he had never seen her look so charming.

"You don't know what lies before you," he

said, gravely, "if you think of battling single-handed against the crowds of London. You don't know the thousands who are far more eager in the fight for bread than you are; because you haven't experienced the necessity yet—"

"I have fought for my bread ever since my poor mother died," she said.

"With exceptional advantages, and these you now abandon. My dear Miss Brunel," he added, earnestly, "you don't know what you're doing. I shudder to think of the future that you seem to have chalked out for yourself. On the other hand, I see a probable future for you in which you would not have to depend upon any one for your support; you would be independent of those people whom you profess to dislike; you would be rich, happy, with plenty of amusement, nothing to trouble you, and you would also secure a pleasant home for Mrs. Christmas—"

"Have you imagined all that out of one of these advertisements?" she asked, with a smile.

"No, Miss Brunel," said the Count, whose earnestness gave him an eloquence which certainly did not often characterize his speech.

"Can't you guess what I mean? I am sure you know how I esteem you—you must have seen it—and perhaps you guessed what feelings lay behind that—and—and now you are alone, as it were, you have no friends—why not accept my home, and become my wife?"

"Your wife?" she repeated, suddenly becoming quite grave, and looking down.

"Yes," he said, delighted to find that she did not get up in a towering passion, as he had seen so many ladies do, under similar circumstances, on the stage, "I hope you do not feel offended. I have spoken too abruptly, perhaps—but now it is out, let me beg of you to listen to me. Look at this, Miss Brunel, fairly—I don't think I have an unkind disposition—I am sincerely attached to you—you are alone, as I say, with scarcely a friend—we have many tastes in common, and as I should have nothing to do but invent amusements for you, I think we should lead an agreeable life. I am not a very young man, but on the other hand I haven't my way to make in the world. You don't like the stage. I am glad of it. It assures me that if you would only think well of my proposal, we should lead a very agreeable life. I'm sure we should have a pleasant, agreeable life; for, after all—it is absurd to mention this just now, perhaps—but one has a good deal of latitude in £30,000 a year—and you don't have to trouble your mind—and if the most devoted affection can make you happy, then happy you'll be."

Annie Brunel sat quite silent, and not very much affected or put out. She had been in good spirits all the morning, had been nerving herself for a heroic and cheerful view of the future; and now here was something to engage her imagination! There is no woman in the world, whatever her training may have been, who, under such circumstances, and with such a pictur-

esque offer held out to her, would refuse at least to regard and try to realize the prospect.

"You are very kind," she said, "to do me so much honor. But you are too kind. You wish to prevent my being subjected to the hardships of being poor and having to work for a living, and you think the easiest way to do that is to make me the mistress of all your money—"

"I declare, Miss Brunel, you wrong me," said the Count, warmly. "Money has nothing to do with it. I mentioned these things as inducements—unwisely perhaps. Indeed it has nothing to do with it. Won't you believe me when I say that I could hope for no greater fortune and blessing in the world, if neither you nor I had a farthing of money, than to make you my wife?"

"I am afraid you would be sadly disappointed," she said, with a smile.

"Will you let me risk that?" he said, eagerly, and trying to take her hand.

She withdrew her hand, and rose.

"I can't tell you yet," she said; "I can scarcely believe that we are talking seriously. But you have been always very kind, and I'm very much obliged to you—"

"Miss Brunel," said the Count, hurriedly—he did not like to hear a lady say she was much obliged by his offer of £30,000 a year—"don't make any abrupt decision, if you have not made up your mind. At any rate, you don't refuse to consider the matter? I knew you would at least, do me that justice—in a week's time, perhaps—"

She gave him her hand, as he lifted his hat and cane, and he gratefully bowed over it, and ventured to kiss it, and then he took his leave, with a radiant smile on his face as he went down stairs.

"Club. And, d—n it, be quick!" he said to his astonished coachman.

Arrived there, he ordered the waiter to take up to the smoking-room a bottle of the pale port which the Count was in the habit of drinking there. Then he countermanded the order.

"I needn't make a beast of myself because I feel happy," he said to himself, wisely, as he went into the dining-room. "Alfred, I'll have a bit of cold chicken, and a bottle of the wine that you flatter yourself is Château Yquem."

Alfred, who was a tall and stately person, with red hair, and no *h's*, was not less astonished than the count's coachman had been. However, he brought the various dishes, and then the wine. The Count poured the beautiful amber fluid into a tumbler, and took a draught of it.

"Here's to her health, whether the wine came from Bordeaux or Biberich."

But as a rule the Château Yquem of clubs is a cold drink, which never sparkled under the warm sun of France; and so, as the Count went up stairs to the smoking room, he returned to his old love, and told them to send him a pint bottle of port. He had already put twenty-two shillings worth of wine into his capacious interior; and he had only to add a glass or two of port, and surround his face with the perfume of

an old, hard, and dry cigar, in order to get into that happy mood when visions are born of the half-somnolent brain.

"... I have done it—I have broken the ice, and there is still hope. Her face was pleased, her smile was friendly, her soft, clear eyes—fancy having that smile and those eyes at your breakfast-table every morning, to sweeten the morning air for you, and make you snap your fingers at the outside world. Gad, I could write poetry about her. I'll *live* poetry—which will be something better . . ."

At this moment there looked into the room a handsome and dressy young gentleman who was the funny fellow of the club. He lived by his wits, and managed to make a good income, considering the material on which he had to work.

"What a courageous man—port in the forenoon!" he said, to the Count.

The other said nothing; but inwardly devoted the new-comer to the depths of Hades.

"And smoking to our old port!"

"A cigar doesn't make much difference to club-wives, young gentleman," said the Count, grandly.

"Heard a good thing just now. Fellow was abusing Scotchmen to a Scotch tradesman, and of course Bannockburn was mentioned. 'Why,' says the Englishman, 'plenty of my countrymen were buried at Bannockburn, and there you have rich harvests of grain. Plenty of *your* countrymen were buried at Culloden, and there you have only a barren waste. Scotchmen can't even fatten the land.'"

"Did he kill him?"

"No; the Englishman was a customer."

Once more the Count was left to his happy imaginings.

"Then the marriage," he thought to himself, "then the marriage—the girls in white, champagne, fun, horses, and flowers, and away for France! No Trouville for me, no Etretat, no Biarritz. A quiet old Norman town, with an old inn, and an old priest; and she and I walking about like the lord and lady of the place, with all the children turning and looking at her as if she were an Italian saint come down from one of the pictures in the church. This is what I offer her—instead of what? A sempstress's garret in Camden town, or a music mistress's lodgings in Islington, surrounded by squalid and dingy people, glaring public-houses, smoke, foul air, wretchedness and misery. I take her from the slums of Islington and I lead her down into the sweet air of Kent, and I make a queen of her!"

The Count's face beamed with pleasure, and port. The very nimbleness of his own imagination tickled him.

"Look at her! In a white, cool, morning-dress, with her big heaps of black hair braided up, as she goes daintily down into the garden in the warm sunshine, and her little fingers are gathering a bouquet for her breast. The raw-boned wives of your country gentry, trying to cut a dash on the money they get from selling their

extra fruit and potatoes, turn and look at my soft little Italian princess as she lies back in her barouche, and regards them kindly enough, God bless her! What a job I shall have to teach her her position—to let her know that now she is a lady the time for general good-humor is gone. Mrs. Anerley, yes; but none of your clergymen's wives, nor your doctors' wives, nor your cow-breeding squires' wives for her! Day after day, week after week, nothing but brightness, and pleasure, and change. All this I am going to give her in exchange for the squalor of Islington!"

The Count regarded himself as the best of men. At this moment, however, there strolled into the smoking-room a certain Colonel Tyrwhitt who was connected by blood or marriage with half-a-dozen peerages, had a cousin in the Cabinet, and wore on his finger a ring given him by the decent and devout old King of Saxony. This Colonel—"a poor devil I could buy up twenty times over," said the Count, many a time—walked up to the fireplace, and turning, proceeded to contemplate the Count, his wine, and cigar, as if these objects had no sensible existence. He stroked his gray mustache once or twice, yawned very openly, and then walked lazily out of the room again without having uttered a word.

"D—n him!" said the Count, mentally; "the wretched pauper, who lives by loo, and looks as grand as an emperor because he has some swell relations, who won't give him a farthing. These are the people who will be struck dumb with amazement and envy by-and-by. My time is coming.

"Ah! my dear fellow," says this colonel to me, some morning; 'I've heard the news. Congratulate you—all my heart. Lord Bockerminster tells me you've some wonderful shooting down in Berks.'

"So I have," says I; 'and I should be glad, Colonel, to ask you down, but you know my wife and I have to be rather select in our choice of visitors—'

"What the devil do you mean?" says he.

"Only that our list of invitations is closed for the present."

"Suppose he gets furious? Let him! I don't know much about fencing or pistol-shooting, but I'd undertake to punch his head twenty times a week."

The Count took another sip of port, and pacified himself.

"Then the presentations to her Majesty. I shouldn't wonder if the Queen took us up when she gets to learn Annie's story. It would be just like the Queen to make some sort of compensation; and once she saw her it would be all right. *The Court Circular*—"Osborne, May 1. Count Schönstein and Lady Annie Knottingley had the honor of dining with the Queen and the Royal Family.' Lord Bockerminster comes up to me, and says,

"Schönstein, old boy, when are you going to give me a turn at your pheasants? I hear

you have the best preserves in the south of England.'

"Well, you see, my lord," I say, carelessly, 'I have the Duke of S—— and a party of gentlemen going down on the 12th, and the Duke is so particular about the people he meets that I—you understand?'

"And why only a Duke? The Prince of Wales is as fond of pheasant-shooting as any body else, I suppose. Why shouldn't he come down with the Princess and a party? and I'd make the papers talk of the splendid hospitality of the place, if I paid, damme, a thousand pounds for every dish. Then to see the Princess—God bless her, for she's the handsomest woman in England, bar one—walking down on the terrace with Annie, while the Prince comes up to me and chaffs me about some blunder I made the day before. Then I say,

"Well, your Royal Highness, if your Royal Highness was over at Schönstein and shooting with my keepers there, perhaps you might put your foot in it too.'

"Count Schönstein," says he, 'you're a good fellow and a trump, and you'll come down with your pretty wife and see us at Frogmore?'

The Count broke into a loud and triumphant laugh, and had nearly demolished the glass in front of him by an unlucky sweep of the arm. Indeed, further than this interview with these celebrated persons, the imagination of the Count could not carry him. He could wish for nothing beyond these things except the perpetuity of them. The Prince of Wales should live forever, if only to be his friend.

And if this ultimate and royal view of the future was even more pleasing than the immediate and personal one, it never occurred to him that there could be any material change in passing from one to the other. Annie Brunel was to be grateful and loving toward him for having taken her from "the squalor of Islington" to give her a wealthy station; she was to be equally grateful and loving when she found herself the means of securing to her husband that position and respect which he had deceived her to obtain. Such trifling points were lost in the full glory which now bathed the future that lay before his eyes. Annie Brunel had shown herself not unwilling to consent, which was equivalent to consenting; and there only remained to be reaped all the happiness which his imagination, assisted by a tolerable quantity of wine, could conceive.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MOTHER CHRISTMAS'S STORY.

ANNIE BRUNEL ran into Mrs. Christmas's room the moment Count Schönstein had left, and, sitting down by the bedside, took the old woman's lean hand in hers.

"Lady Jane, I have been looking over the advertisements in the *Times*, and do you know what I have found?"

"No."

"One offering me a marvellous lot of money, and a fine house in the country, with nice fresh air and constant attendance for you. Horses, carriages, opera-boxes, months at the sea-side—every thing complete. There!"

"Why don't you take it, sweetheart?" said the old woman, with a faint smile.

"Because—I don't say that I sha'n't take it—there is a condition attached, and such a condition! Not to puzzle you, mother, any more, Count Schönstein wants me to be his wife. Now!"

"Are you serious, Annie?" said Mrs. Christmas, her aged eyes full of astonishment.

"I can't say. I don't think the Count was. You know he is not a witty man, mother, and it *might* be a joke. But if it was a joke, he acted the part admirably—he pulled two leaves out of my photographic album, and nibbled a hole in the table-cover with his nail. He sat so, Lady Jane, and said, in a deep bass voice, 'Miss Brunel, I have £30,000 a year; I am old; I am affectionate; and will you marry me?' Any thing more romantic you could not imagine; and the sighs he heaved, and the anxiety of his face, would have been admirable, had he been dressed as 'Orlando,' and playing to my 'Rosalind.' *'For these two hours, Rosalind, I will leave thee.'* '*Alas, dear love, I can not lack thee two hours!'*"

"Sweetheart, have you grown mad? What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. Must I describe the whole scene to you?—my lover's fearful diffidence, my gentle silence, his growing confidence, my wonder and bewilderment; finally, his half-concealed joy, and my hasty rush to you, Lady Jane, to tell you the news."

"And a pretty return you are making for any man's confidence and affection, to go on in that way. What did you say to him?"

"Nothing."

"And what do you mean to say?"

"Nothing. What can I say, Lady Jane? I am sure he must have been joking; and, if not, he ought to have been. At the same time, I don't laugh at the Count himself, mother, but at his position a few minutes ago."

"And as you laugh at that, you laugh at the notion of becoming his wife."

The smile died away from the girl's face, and for some time she sat and gazed wistfully before her. Then she said,

"You ought to be able to say what I ought to do, mother. I did not say No, I did not say Yes; I was too afraid to say either. And now, if we are to talk seriously about it, I am quite as much afraid. Tell me what to do, Lady Jane?"

"Is it so entirely a matter of indifference that you can accept my advice?"

"It is quite a matter of indifference," said the girl, calmly.

"Do you love him, Annie?" said the old woman.

For one brief second the girl's thoughts flashed to the man whom she did love; but they returned with only a vague impression of pain and doubt. She had not had time to sit down and reason out her course of duty. She could only judge as yet by the feelings awakened by the Count's proposal, and the pictures which it exhibited to her mind.

"Do I love him, mother?" she said, in a low voice. "I like him very well, and I am sure he is very fond of me; I am quite sure of that."

"And what do you say yourself about it?"

"What can I say? If I marry him," she said, coldly, "it will give him pleasure, and I know he will be kind to me and to you. It is his wish—not mine. We should not be asking or receiving a favor, mother. I suppose he loves me as well as he loves any one; and I suppose I can make as good a wife as any one else."

There was in this speech the faint indication of a bitterness having its root in a far deeper bitterness, which had suggested the whole tone of this interview. When Mrs. Christmas thought the girl was laughing cruelly at a man who had paid her the highest compliment in his power, when she saw this girl exhibiting an exaggerated heartlessness in talking of the proposed marriage as a marriage of convenience, she did not know that this indifference and heartlessness were but the expression of a deep, and hopeless, and despairing love.

"Poverty is not a nice thing, mother; and until I should have established myself as a teacher of music, we should have to be almost beggars. The Count offers us a pleasant life: and I dare say I can make his dull house a little more cheerful to him. It is a fair bargain. He does not ask me if I love him; probably he did not see the necessity any more than I do. What he proposes will be a comfortable arrangement for all of us."

Mrs. Christmas looked at the calm, beautiful, sad face, and said nothing.

"I think the Count is an honorable, well-meaning man," continued the girl, in the same cold tone. "If he sometimes makes himself ridiculous, so do most of us; and doubtless he is open to improvement. I think he is remarkably good-natured and generous, and I am sure he will be kind to us."

Consider Mrs. Christmas's position. An old woman, almost bed-ridden, ailing, and requiring careful and delicate attention—one who has seen much of the folly of love and much of the power of money—is asked for her advice by a young girl who is either on the one hand to marry a wealthy, good-natured man, willing to give both a comfortable home, or, on the other hand, to go out alone into the world of London, unprotected and friendless, to earn bread for two people. Even admitting that no grain of selfishness should color or shape her advice, what was she likely to say?

Ninety-nine women out of a hundred, under such circumstances, would say, "My dear, be sensible and accept the offer of a worthy and

honorable gentleman, instead of exposing yourself to the wretchedness and humiliation of poverty. Romance won't keep you from starving; and besides, in your case, there is no romantic affection to compel you to choose between love and money. People who have come to my time of life know the advantages of securing a happy home and kind friends."

This, too, is probably what Mrs. Christmas would have said—if she had not been born and bred an actress. This is what she did say:

"My dear" (with a kindly smile on the wan face), "suppose you and I are going forward to the foot-lights, and I take your hand in mine, and look into your face, and say, 'Listen to the sad story of your mother's life?'"

"Well, Lady Jane?"

"You are supposed to be interested in it, and take its moral deeply to heart. Well, I'm going to tell you a story, sweetheart, although you may not see any moral in it—it's a story your mother knew."

"If she were here now!" the girl murmured, inaudibly.

"When I was three years younger than you, I was first chambermaid in the Theatre Royal, Bristol. Half the pit were my sweethearts; and I got heaps of letters, of the kind that you know, Annie—some of them impudent, some of them very loving and respectful. Sometimes it was, 'My dear Miss, will you take a glass of wine with me at such and such a place, on such and such a night;' and sometimes it was, 'I dare not seek an introduction, lest I read my fate in your refusal. I can only look at you from afar off, and be miserable.' Poor boys, they were all very kind to me, and used to take such heaps of tickets for my benefits, for in Bristol, you know, the first chambermaid had a benefit like her betters."

"There were none better than you in the theatre, I'm sure, mother," said Annie.

"Don't interrupt the story, my dear; for we are at the foot-lights, and the gallery is supposed to be anxious to hear it. I declare I have always loved the top gallery. There you find critics who are attentive, watchful—who are ready to applaud when they're pleased, and to hiss when they're not. Well, there was one poor lad, out of all my admirers, got to be acquainted with our little household, and he and I became—friends. He was a wood-engraver, or something like that, only a little older than myself, long, fair hair, a boyish face, gentleness like a girl about him, and nothing would do but that I should engage to be his wife, and he was to be a great artist and do wonders for my sake."

The hard look on the young girl's face had died away now, and there was a dreaminess in her eyes.

"I did promise; and for about two years we were a couple of the maddest young fools in the world—I begging him to make haste, and get money, and marry me—he full of audacious schemes, and as cheerful as a lark in the certainty of marrying me. He tried painting pic-

tures; then he began scene-painting, and succeeded so well that he at last got an engagement in a London theatre, and nearly broke his heart when he went away there to make money for both of us."

The old woman heaved a gentle sigh.

"Whenever I'm very sad, all the wretchedness of that first parting of my life comes over me, and I see the wet streets of Bristol, and the shining lamps, and his piteous face, though he tried to be very brave over it, and cheer me up. I felt like a stone, and didn't know what was going on; I only wished that I could get away into a corner and cry myself dead. Very well, he went, and I remained in Bristol. I needn't tell you how it came about—how I was a little tired of waiting, and we had a quarrel, and, in short, I married a gentleman who had been very kind and attentive to me. He was over thirty, and had plenty of money, for he was a merchant in Bristol, and his father was an old man who had made a fine big fortune in Jamaica. He was very kind to me, in his way; and for a year or two we lived very well together; but I knew that he thought twenty times of his business for once he thought of me. And what was I thinking of? Ah, Miss Annie, don't consider me very wicked if I tell you that from the hour in which I was married there never passed a single day in which I did not think of the *other one*."

"Poor mother!" said the girl.

"Every day; and I used to go down on my knees and pray for him, that so I might be sure my interest in him was harmless. We came to London too; and every time I drove along the streets—I sat in my own carriage then, my dear—I used to wonder if I should see *him*. I went to the theatre in which he was scene-painter, thinking I might catch a glimpse of him from one of the boxes, passing though the wings; but I never did. I knew his house, however, and sometimes I passed it; but I never had the courage to look at the windows, for fear he should be there. It was very wicked, very wicked, Annie."

"Was your husband kind to you?"

"In a distant sort of a way that tormented me. He seemed always to consider me an actress, and a baby; and he invariably went out into society alone, lest I should compromise him, I suppose. I think I grew mad altogether; for one day I left his house resolved never to go back again—"

"And you said he was kind to you!" repeated the girl, with a slight accent of reproach.

"I suppose I was mad, Annie; at any rate I felt myself driven to it, and couldn't help myself. I went straight to the street in which he lived, and walked up and down, expecting to meet him. He did not come. I took lodgings in a coffee-house. Next day I went back to that street; even then I did not see him. On the third afternoon, I saw him come down the steps from his house, and I all at once felt sick and cold. How different he looked now!—firm, and resolute, and manly, but still with the old gentle-

ness about the eyes. He turned very pale when he saw me, and was about to pass on. Then he saw that my eyes followed him, and perhaps they told him something, for he turned and came up to me, and held out his hand, without saying a word."

There were tears in the old woman's eyes now.

"You forgive me?" I said, and he said 'Yes' so eagerly that I looked up again. I took his arm, and we walked on, in the old fashion, and I forgot every thing but the old, old days, and I wished I could have died just then. It seemed as if all the hard intervening years had been swept out, and we were still down in Bristol, and still looking forward to a long life together. I think we were both out of our senses for several minutes; and I shall never forget the light there was on his face and in his eyes. Then he began to question me, and all at once he turned to me, with a scared look, and said,

"What have you done?"

"It was past undoing then: I knew he loved me at that moment as much as ever, by the terrible state he got into. He implored me to go back to my husband. I told him it was too late. I had already been away two days from home.

"If I could only have seen you on the day you left your husband's house," he said, 'this would never have happened. I should have made you go back.'

"Then I began to feel a kind of fear, and I said,

"What am I to do, Charlie? What are you going to do with me?"

"I?" he said. "Do you ask me what I must do? Would you have me leave my wife and children—"

"I did not know he was married, you see, Miss Annie. Oh, the shame that came over me when I heard these words! The moment before I scarcely knew that I walked at all, so deliriously full of joy I was; then I wished the ground would open beneath my feet. He offered to go to my husband and intercede for me; but I would have drowned myself rather than go back. I was the wretchedest woman in the whole world. And I could see that he loved me as much as ever, though he never would say so. That is all of my story that need concern you; but shall I tell you the rest, Miss Annie?"

"Yes, Lady Jane."

"Your mother was then the most popular actress in London; she could do any thing she liked in the theatre; and it was for that theatre that he chiefly worked then, though he became a great artist afterward. Well, he took me back to the coffee-house, and left me there; and then he went and persuaded your mother to take an interest in me, and through her means I got an engagement in the same theatre. From the moment I was settled there, he treated me almost like a stranger. He took off his hat to me in the street, and passed on without speaking. If I met him in the theatre, he would say

'Good-evening' as he would to the other ladies. He used to send me little presents; and he never forgot my birthday; but they were always sent anonymously, and if I saw him the next day he seemed more distant than ever, as if to keep me away. Oh, many and many a time have I been on the point of throwing myself at his feet, and clasping his knees, and thanking him with my whole heart for his goodness to me. I used to hate his wife, whom I had never seen, until one Sunday morning I saw her and him going to church, one little girl at his hand, another at hers—and the sweet face she had turned my heart toward her. Would you believe it, he bowed to me as kindly and respectful as ever, and I think he would have stopped and spoken to me *then*, only I hurried away out of his sight."

"And you never went back?" said the girl, softly.

"How could I go back, clothed with shame, and subject myself to his suspicion? Besides, he was the last man to have taken me back. Once he felt sure I had left his house willfully, I am certain he did not trouble himself much about me—as why should he?—why should he?"

"It is a very sad story, Lady Jane."

"And it has a moral."

"But not for me. You are afraid I should marry Count Schönstein out of pique, and so be wretched? But there is no other person whom I could marry."

"Come closer to me, sweetheart. There, bend your head down, and whisper. *Is there no other person whom you love?*"

The girl's head was so close down to the pillow that the blush on her face was unseen as she said, in a scarcely audible voice,

"There is, mother."

"I thought so, my poor girl. And he loves you, does he not?"

"He does, Lady Jane. That is the misery of it."

"You think he is not rich enough? He has his way to make? Or perhaps his friends—"

"You are speaking of—"

"Mr. Anerley."

"But all your conjectures are wrong, mother—all quite wrong. Indeed, I can not explain it to you. I only know, mother, that I am very unhappy."

"And you mean to marry Count Schönstein to revenge yourself—"

"I did not say I would marry Count Schönstein," said the girl, fretfully, "and I have nothing to revenge. I am very sorry, Lady Jane, to think of the sad troubles you have had; and you are very good to warn me; but I have not quarrelled with any body, and I am not asked to wait in order to marry any body, and—"

Here she raised herself up, and the old bitter, hard look came to the sad and gentle face.

"—And if I should marry Count Schönstein, I shall disappoint no one, and break no promise. Before I marry Count Schönstein, he shall know what he may expect from me. I can give him

my esteem, and confidence, and a certain amount of liking; and many people have lived comfortably on less. And you, mother, should be the last to say any thing against an arrangement which would give you comfort, and relieve your mind from anxiety—"

"And you have lived so long with me," said old Mother Christmas, reproachfully, "and you don't know yet that sooner than let *my* comfort bring you to harm, Annie, or tempt you to a false step, I would twenty times rather beg my bread?"

"Forgive me, mother!" said the girl, impetuously, "but I don't know what I've been saying. Every thing seems wrong, and cruel, and if I forget that you have been a mother to me, it is— it is because—I am—so miserable that—"

And here the two women had a hearty cry together, which smoothed down their troubles for the present, and drew them closer to each other.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LEFT ALONE.

"No," said Dove, blocking up the door-way with her slight little figure, as the wagonette was driven round, "neither of you stirs a step until you tell me where you are going."

Will's last injunction to his father had been "Don't let the women know." So the women did not know; and on this Monday morning both men were stealthily slipping away up to London when the heroic little Dove caught them in the act.

"We are going to London, my dear," said Mr. Anerley.

"On business," said Will.

"Yes, on business!" said Dove, ponting. "I know what it is. You go into somebody's office in the forenoon and talk a little; and then both of you go away and play billiards; then you dine at Will's club or at a hotel, and then you go to the theatre."

"Will has been telling tales," said Mr. Anerley.

"And to-day of all days," continued the implacable Dove, "when you know very well, papa, and you needn't try to deny it, that you promised to help me in getting down the last of the walnuts. No; neither of you shall stir this day; so you may as well send back the wagonette."

"My dear, the most important business—" said Mr. Anerley, gravely.

"I don't care," said Dove. "If you two people are going up to amuse yourselves in London, you must take me. Else stay at home."

"But how can you go?" said Will. "We have now barely time to catch the train."

"Go by the ten o'clock train," said Dove, resolutely, "and I shall be dressed by then. Or the walnuts, if you like."

"Of the two evils, I prefer to take you," said Will. "So run and get your things ready; and we shall take you to the theatre to-night."

"My boy," said his father, when she was gone, "look at the additional expense—"

"In for a penny, in for a pound, father," said Will. "I shall allow my finances to suffer for the stall-tickets; and you, having just been ruined, ought to be in a position to give us a very nice dinner. People won't believe you have lost your money unless you double your expenditure and scatter money about as freely as dust."

"You both look as if I had thrust myself on you!" said Dove, reproachfully, as they all got into the wagonette, and drove off. "But I forgive you, as you're going to take me to the theatre. Shall I tell you which, Will? Take me to see Miss Brunel, won't you?"

She looked into his face for a moment; but there was evidently no covert intention in her words.

From Charing Cross station they drove to the Langham Hotel. Dove said she was not afraid to spend an hour or so in looking at the Regent Street and Oxford Street shops, while the gentlemen were gone into the City. At the expiry of that time she was to return to the hotel and wait for them. They then took a hansom and drove to Mr. Anerley's solicitor.

"And there," said Mr. Anerley, on the way, "as if we were not sufficiently penniless, Hubbard's brougham and a pair of his horses are coming over to-morrow."

"Did you buy them?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"For Dove. I was afraid of her driving in an open vehicle during the winter, as she has been rather delicate all the time you were away. I had calculated on selling the wagonette and Oscar; and now I have the whole lot on my hands."

"How much have you promised him for them?"

"£200. I hope he'll let me withdraw from the bargain."

"He won't. I know the Count very well," said the young man. "He is a good fellow in his way, but he wants credit for his goodness. He'll stick to this bargain, because he thinks it advantageous to himself; and *then* he will, with the greatest freedom, lend you the £200, or a larger sum, if you require it. Nor will he lend you the money at interest; but he will let you know what interest he would have received had he lent it to somebody else."

"Perhaps so. But how to pay him the £200?"

"Tell him, if he does not take back his brougham and horses, you will become bankrupt, and only pay him tenpence in the pound."

Mr. Anerley's solicitor—a stout, cheerful little man—did his very best to look sorrowful, and would probably have shed tears, had he been able, to give effect to his condolence. Any more material consolation he had none. There was no doubt about it: Miall and Welling had wholly collapsed. Ultimately, the lawyer suggested that things might pull together again; but in the mean time shareholders were likely to suffer.

"They do hint queer things about the directors," he continued; "and if what I hear whispered be true, I'd have some of them put in the stocks until they told what they had done with the money. I'd make 'em disgorge it, sir. Why, sir, men settling their forty or fifty thousand a year on their wives out of money belonging to all sorts of people who have worked for it, who have nothing else to live on, who are likely to starve—"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Anerley, calmly, "you don't look at the matter in its proper light. You don't see the use of such men. You don't reflect that the tendency to excess of reproduction in animals is wholesomely checked by the ravages of other animals. But who is to do that for men, except men? There is, you see, a necessity for human tigers, to prey on their species, kill the weakly members, and improve the race by limiting its numbers and narrowing the conditions of existence."

"That's very nice as a theory, Mr. Anerley; but it wouldn't console me for losing the money that you have lost."

"Because you don't believe in it. Tell me now, how is a penniless man, without a trade, but with some knowledge of the multiplication table, to gain a living in London?"

"There are too many trying to solve the problem, Mr. Anerley," said the lawyer.

"You say there is a chance of the bank retrieving itself in a certain time?"

"Yes. I have shown you how the money has been sunk. But in time—"

"Until then, those who are in a position like myself, must contrive to exist somehow."

"That's it."

"Unfortunately, I never settled, as you know, a farthing on my wife; and as for my life-insurance, they illogically and unreasonably exclude suicide from their list of casualties. Your ordinary suicide does not compass his own death any more doggedly than the man who persists in living in an undrained house, or in drinking brandy until his brain gives way, or in lighting his pipe in a coal-mine. However, that's neither here nor there. You have been my lawyer, Mr. Green, for a great many years, and you have given me some good advice. But at the most critical moment, I find you without a scrap. Still I bear you no malice; for I don't owe you any money."

"It isn't very easy, sir, to tell a gentleman how to recover his fortune," said Mr. Green, with a smile; glad that his client was taking matters so coolly.

"I was a gentleman three days ago," said Mr. Anerley. "Now I am a man, very anxious to live, and not seeing my way clearly toward that end."

"Come, sir," said Will, "Mr. Green is anxious to live, too; and we are taking up his time."

"But really, Mr. Anerley," said the lawyer, "I should like to know what your views are."

"Ah, you want to know what I propose to do. I am not good at blacking boots. I am indiffer-

ent at cookery. Gardening—well, no. I should like to be head-keeper to a duke; or, if they start any more of these fancy stage-coaches between London and the sea-side, I can drive pretty well."

"You are joking," said the other, dubiously.

"A man with empty pockets never jokes, unless he hopes to fill them. At present—well, good-day to you—you will let me know if you hear of any thing to my advantage."

No sooner were they outside, than Will earnestly remonstrated with his father.

"You should not suddenly lose you pride, sir."

"I never had any, my boy. If I had, it is time I should lose it."

"And why need you talk of taking a situation? If you can only tide over a little time, Miall and Welling will come all right."

"My lad, the bladders that help you to float in that little time are rather expensive."

"I have a few pounds—"

"And you will lend me them. Good. What we must do now is this. Get your landlord to give us a couple of bedrooms in the house, and we can all use your sitting-room. Then we shall be together; and the first opportunity I have offered me of earning money, in whatever employment, I will accept it."

"If I were not disabled, sir, by this comfounded arm, you would not need to do any thing of this kind."

"Tuts! Every man for himself, and all of us for poor Dove, who, at present, will be moping up in that great room, terrified by the attentions of the waiters."

How they passed the day does not matter to us. In the evening they went to the theatre, and chose, at Will's instigation, the dress-circle instead of the stalls. He hoped that he might escape being seen.

He had scarcely cast his eye over the bill handed to him by the box-keeper, when he discovered that Annie Brunel's name was not there at all.

"Dove," he said, "here is a disappointment for you. Miss Featherstone plays 'Rosalind' to-night, not Miss Brunel."

"Doesn't she appear at all to-night?" said Dove, with a crestfallen face.

"Apparently not. Will you go to some other theatre?"

"No," said Dove, decidedly. "I want to see 'Rosalind,' whoever is 'Rosalind.' Don't you papa?"

"My dear, I want to see any thing that you want to see; and I'm sure to be pleased if you laugh."

"It isn't a laughing part, and you know that quite well, you tedious old thing," said Dove.

Will went and saw Mr. Melton, from whom he learned little beyond the fact that Annie Brunel did not intend to act any more in his theatre.

"She is not unwell?"

"I believe not."

"Has she given up the stage altogether?"

"I fancy so. You'd better ask Count Schönstein: he seems to know all about it," said Mr. Melton, with a peculiar smile.

"Why should *he* know all about it?" asked Will, rather angrily: but Melton only shrugged his shoulders.

He returned to his place by Dove's side: but the peculiar meaning of that smile—or rather the possible meaning of it—vexed and irritated him so that he could not remain there. He professed himself tired of having seen the piece so often; and said he would go out for a walk, to cure himself of a headache he had, and return before the play was over.

So he went out into the cool night air, and wandered carelessly on along the dark streets, bearing vaguely westward. He was thinking of many things, and scarcely knew that he rambled along Piccadilly, and still westward, until he found himself in the neighborhood of Kensington.

Then he stopped; and when he recognized the place in which he stood, he laughed slightly and bitterly.

"Down here, of course. I had persuaded myself I had no wish to go to the theatre beyond that of taking Dove there, and that I was not disappointed when I found she did not play. Well, my feet are honester than my head."

He took out his watch. He had walked down so quickly that there were nearly two hours before he had to return to the theatre. Then he said to himself that, as he had nothing to do, he might as well walk down and take a look at the house which he knew so well. Perhaps it was the last time he might look on it, and know that she was inside.

So he walked in that direction, taking little heed of the objects around him. People passed and repassed along the pavement; they were to him vague and meaningless shadows, occasionally lit up by the glare of a shop window or a lamp. Here and there he noticed some tall building, or other object, which recalled old scenes and old times; and, indeed, he walked on in a kind of dream, in which the past was as clearly around him as the present.

At the corner of the street leading down to the smaller street, or square, in which Annie Brunel lived, there was a chemist's shop, with large windows looking both ways. Also at the corner of the pavement was a lamp, which shed its clear orange light suddenly on the faces of the men and women who passed.

He paused there for a moment, uncertain whether to turn or venture on, when a figure came out of the shop which—without his recognizing either the dress or the face—startled him and made him involuntarily withdraw a step. It was the form, perhaps, or the motion, that told him who it was; at all events he knew that she herself was there, within a few yards of him. He did not know what to do. There was a vague desire in his heart to throw to the wind all considerations, his promise, his duty to one very dear

to him; but he only looked apprehensively at her. It was all over in a second—in half a second. She caught sight of him, shrank back a little, uncertain, trembling, and then appeared as if she were about to pass on. But the great yearning in both their hearts suddenly became master of the situation; for, at the same moment, apparently moved by the same impulse, they advanced to each other, he caught her hands in his, and there was between them only one intense look of supreme and unutterable joy.

Such a look it is given to most men to receive once or twice—seldom oftener—in their lives. It is never to be forgotten. When a strong revulsion of feeling, from despondency and despair to the keen delight of meeting again, draws away from a girl's eyes that coy veil of maiden bashfulness that generally half-shrouds their light, when the spirit shines full and frank there, no disguise being longer possible, and it seems as if the beautiful eyes had speech in them—but how is it possible to describe such a moment in cold and brittle words. The remembrance of one such meeting colors a man's life. You know that when you have lain and dreamed of enjoying companionship with one hopelessly separated from you—of seeing glad eyes you can never see again, and hearing sweet talk that you can never again hear—you rise with a confused sense of happiness, as if the morning air were full of tender thrills—you still hear the voice, and you seem to be walking by the side of the sea, and there is sunshine and the sound of waves abroad. That dizzy remembrance, in itself a perplexing, despairing joy, is something like the thought of such a moment and such a look as that I speak of, when one glances backward, after long years, and wonders how near heaven earth has been.

When she went toward him, and looked up into his face, and when they walked away together, there was no thought of speech between them. Silence being so full of an indescribable joy, why should they break it? It was enough that they were near each other—that, for the present, there was no wide and mournful space between them, full of dim longings and bitter regrets. To-morrow was afar off, and did not concern them.

"Did you come to see me?" she said at last, very timidly

"No."

Another interval of supreme silence, and then he said:

"Have you got quite reconciled yet? I was afraid of seeing you—of meeting you; but now it seems as if it were a very harmless pleasure. Do you remember the last terrible night?"

"There is no use talking of that," she said; "and yet we ought not to meet each other—except—you know—"

"As friends, of course," he said, with a smile. "Well, Annie, we sha'n't be enemies; but I do think myself it were rather more prudent, you understand, that we should not see each other—"

for a long time, at least. Now, tell me, why are you not at the theatre?"

"I have given up the theatre."

"You do not mean to act any more?"

"No."

There suddenly recurred to him Mr. Melton's significant smile; and dead silence fell upon him. If there could be any thing in the notion that the Count—

Clearly, it was no business of his whether she married the Count or no. Nay, if it were possible that her marriage with the Count should blot out certain memories, he ought to have been rejoiced at it. And yet a great dread fell upon him when he thought of this thing; and he felt as though the trusting little hand which was laid upon his arm had no business there, and was an alien touch.

"But," he said, in rather an embarrassed way, "if you have given up the theatre, it must have been for some reason—"

"For the reason that I could not bear it a moment longer."

"And now—"

"Now I am free."

"Yes, of course, free; but still—what do you propose to do?"

"I don't know yet. I have been looking at some advertisements—"

"Have you actually no plan whatever before you?" he said, with surprise—and yet the surprise was not painful.

"None."

"Why," he said, "we have all of us got into a nice condition, just as in a play. I shouldn't wonder if the next act found the whole of us in a garret, in the dead of winter, of course."

"What do you mean?"

"My father has lost all his money, and doesn't know where to turn to keep his household alive. I—"

Here he stopped.

"Ah," she said, "and you find yourself unable to help them because of your arm."

"That will soon be better," he said, cheerfully, "and we will try not to starve. But you—what are you going to do? You do not know people in London; and you do not know the terrible struggle that lies in wait for any unaided girl, trying to make a living."

"So the Count says."

"Oh, you have told the Count?"

"Yes."

"What did he suggest?"

"He thinks I ought to marry him," she said, frankly.

"You marry him?"

"Yes. That was the only way, I dare say, in which he thought he could be of service to me. He really is so very kind, and thoughtful, and unselfish."

"And you answered—"

He uttered these words with an air of forced carelessness. He wished her to understand that he would be rather glad if she thought well of the proposal. For a moment she looked at him,

questioningly, as if to ask whether there was honest advice in that tone, and then she said, slowly:

"I said neither yes nor no. At the moment I did not know what to think. I—I knew that he would be kind to me, and that—he knew—that I liked him pretty well—as an acquaintance—"

"And you have not decided whether you ought to make the Count happy or no?"

The false cheerfulness of his voice did not deceive her.

"Yes, I have decided," she said, in a low voice.

"And you will—"

"Why not be frank with me?" she said, passionately, and turning to him with imploring eyes. "Why speak like that?—would you not despise me if I married that man?—would I not despise myself? You see I talk to you frankly, for you are my friend: I could not marry him—I dare not think of my being his *wife*. I shall never be his wife—I shall never be any man's wife."

"Annie be reasonable—"

"Perhaps it is not to you I should say that, and yet I know it. I am ashamed of myself when I think that I let him go away with the thought that I *might* accept his offer. But then I had not decided—I did not see it properly, not until I looked in your face tonight."

"It seems that I must always come between you and happiness."

"Do you call that happiness? But I must go back now; poor Lady Jane is rather worse to-day, and I was at the chemist's with a prescription from the doctor when I met you. I hope we have not done wrong in speaking to each other."

So they went back, and he bade her farewell tenderly, and yet not so sadly as at their former parting.

"It seemed to him as he passed away from the door, that he heard a faint sharp cry from inside the house. He took no notice of it however. He was already some distance off when he heard swift footsteps behind him, and then the maid-servant of the house, breathless and wild-eyed, caught him by the arm.

"Oh, sir, please come back; Mrs. Christmas is dead, sir! and the young missis is in such a dreadful state!"

"He at once hurried back, and found that the terrible intelligence was too true. Annie Brunel seemed almost to have lost her senses—so bitterly did she reproach herself for having neglected the bedside of her old friend.

"She was well enough, ma'am, when you went out," the servant maintained, consoling her mistress, "and there was nothing you could have done. I was in the room, and she asked for those letters as always lies in that drawer, ma'am; and when I took them over to her she tried to put up her hand, and then she sank back, and in a minute it was all over. What could you have

done, ma'am? She couldn't ha' spoken a word to you."

But the girl was inconsolable, and it was past midnight when Will left her, having wholly failed in his efforts to soothe the bitterness of her grief and desolation.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE COUNT EXPLAINS.

WHEN Will returned to the hotel he found his father waiting up for him alone. He was too much overcome by the terrible scene he had just witnessed to make any but the barest apology for his discourtesy, and even that his father interrupted as unnecessary.

"I left the theatre early," he said, gloomily. "Dove was feverish and unwell. I think she must have caught cold when coming up with us in the morning. When I got her here her cheeks were flushed and hot, and I saw that she was restless and languid by turns; in short very feverish."

"Did you send for a doctor?"

"Oh no; there was nothing one could speak of him about. To-morrow morning, if these symptoms are not gone, it might be advisable to consult some one."

They sat up very late that night discussing their future plans. There were but two alternatives before them. It was considered possible that with a few thousand pounds Mr. Anerley could meet present liabilities, and wait over for the time at which it was hoped the affairs of the bank would, through the realization of certain securities, be in a fair way of recovery. If, on the other hand, this present money was not forthcoming, the only course for Mr. Anerley was to remove from St. Mary-Kirby to London, and try to find some means of subsistence in the great city.

"There is only Hubbard of all my old acquaintances in a position to help me," said Mr. Anerley; "and he is the last whom I should like to ask for any such favor."

"I think you are inclined to misjudge the Count, sir," said Will; "and in this case you ought at least to see what he has to say before impeaching his good feeling. After all, you will find a good many men with as much money as the Count, and as little to spend it on, quite as unwilling to oblige an old friend as you half expect him to be."

After a good deal of argument, it was arranged that Mr. Anerley should see the Count on the following morning. Will forced him to this decision by a long description of what would fall upon the St. Mary-Kirby household in the event of his refusal.

"What is your pride compared with their wretchedness?" he said.

"My boy," he replied, "I have no pride except when I have a good gun in my hand and a good dog working bravely in front of me. Far-

ther, do you know so little of your own family as to think that poverty, the nightmare of novelists, would be so appalling to them?"

"Not to them, perhaps; but to you, looking at them."

And that was true of the Chestnut Bank household. Misfortune was as bitter to them as to any other family; only it was for one another that they grieved. They had been educated into a great unselfishness through the constant kindly and half-mocking counsel of the head of the house; but that unselfishness only embittered misfortune. They did not brood over their individual mishaps, but they exaggerated the possible effects of misfortune on each other, and shared this imaginary misery. Mr. Anerley was not much put out by the knowledge that henceforth he would scarcely have the wherewithal to keep himself decently clothed; but it was only when he thought of Dove being deprived of her port wine, and of Mrs. Anerley being cabined up in London lodgings (though these two were as careless of these matters as he about his matters) that he vowed he would go and see Count Schönstein, and beg him for this present assistance.

"As for Dove, poor girl," he said to Will, "you know what riches she prizes. You know what she craves for. A look from one she loves is riches to her; you can make her as wealthy as an empress by being kind to her."

"I'm sure no one ever could be unkind to her," said Will.

But the visit to Count Schönstein was postponed next morning; for Dove was worse than on the previous night and was fain to remain in bed. Of course, a physician was called in. He had a long talk with Mr. Anerley, afterward; and perhaps it was his manner, more than any thing he actually said, that disquieted Dove's guardian. What he actually did say was that the young girl was evidently very delicate; that on her tender constitution this slight febrile attack might lead to graver consequences; and that she must at once have careful, womanly nursing and country air. *Per se*, her ailment was not of a serious character.

Mrs. Anerley was at once telegraphed for. Under the circumstances, they did not care to remove Dove to St. Mary-Kirby, with the chance of her having to return a few days afterward to London.

"And if I had any misgivings about asking the Count to lend me the money," said Mr. Anerley, "I have none now. If country air is necessary to Dove's health, country air she shall have somehow or other."

"If we can not manage that, sir," said Will, "we had better go and bury ourselves for a couple of imbeciles."

So it was on the next morning that Mr. Anerley went to Count Schönstein's house in Bayswater. He went early; and found that the Count had just breakfasted. He was shown up to the drawing-room.

It was a large and handsome apartment,

showily and somewhat tawdrily furnished. A woman's hand was evidently wanted in the place. The pale lavender walls, with their stripes of delicately-painted panelling, were scratched and smudged here and there; the chintz coverings of the couches and chairs were ragged and uneven; and the gauzy drapery of the chandeliers and mirrors was about as thick with dust as the ornate books which lay uncovered on the tables. There were a hundred other little points which a woman's eye would have detected, but which, on the duller masculine perception, only produced a vague feeling of uncomfortable disorder and want of cleanliness.

The Count entered in a gorgeously-embroidered dressing-gown, above the collar of which a black satin neckerchief was tied round his neck in a series of oily folds.

"Good-morning, Anerley," he said, in his grandest manner—so grand, indeed, that his visitor was profoundly surprised. Indeed, the Count very rarely attempted seigniorial airs with his Chestnut Bank neighbor.

"Good-mornings," said Mr. Anerley, somewhat coldly. "I called on business matters, and shall not detain you. Business matters they are in one sense, but not in another. You know of Miall and Welling being down."

"I told your son of it."

"Do you know the position of their affairs?"

"As much as my neighbors do, I imagine."

"And would that knowledge induce you to do me the very great service of lending me some money for a certain time? I believe they will pull through—in any case, as I need scarcely tell you, your money is safe. Frankly this blow has fallen upon me when I was quite unprepared; and unless I can find some means of staying off the necessity for a little while, I shall have to leave St. Mary-Kirby and try to find some means of subsistence in London. *That* I shouldn't mind so much, if it were not for poor Dove, who has been taken unwell and must have country air. You see, then, what urgent need I have to ask you for this kindness."

The Count folded his arms behind his back, and said, in his stateliest manner—

"Mr. Anerley, you come to me for assistance: why don't you look to your own son?"

The old man regarded the strange figure opposite him with some puzzled curiosity. Then he rose with a good-natured smile on his face.

"Thanks for your candor, Count," he said.

"I ventured to ask this obligation simply—"

"But stay, Mr. Anerley, don't imagine I refuse you the money—"

"My dear sir, the tone of your apology is sufficient—"

"D—n it, Anerley, be reasonable," cried the Count, irritated into being natural. "I want to tell you something you don't know any thing about. You have lost all your money through Miall and Welling—in the mean time. Naturally, you ought to look to your son for help. I don't suppose he is very rich; but still it is his duty, you know, to do what he can. Very well.

He is in the same predicament as you—he has the misfortune to be deprived of his means of living. In that case, what might one expect?"

The Count waved his hand in triumphantly bringing this speech to a conclusion.

"I'm not good at riddles," said Mr. Anerley, quietly, "and really you must excuse me if I say that I don't see what all that has to do with—"

"Spare me another minute. Where was your son the night before last—all the evening—when you were in the theatre?"

"I don't know."

"I do. While he should have been attending to you and that poor girl who you say is unwell—when he should have been thinking of how he could increase his income and devote it to your needs—he was dancing attendance on an actress who, I dare say, will be either his wife or his mistress, accordingly as he finds it convenient. Not only that, but he has ruined the girl in her profession. He has caused her to abandon the stage, and she is now in a condition bordering on beggary, yet such is her infatuation for him that she will not accept assistance. And this is the man in whose stead you would have me stand. I am to lend you money that he may continue unchecked in his licentious courses. A month ago—a week ago—would I have believed this of him? No. But I have found him out—I have found out the long course of hypocrisy which came to a climax on the night before last, when he kept the wretched girl wandering about the streets, while her guardian—the only intimate friend she had in the world—was lying dying at home."

Mr. Anerley remained calm and impassive until the Count had finished his last sentence. Then he said, with a cold preciseness which suited the ill-concealed scorn on his features:

"I ventured, Count Schönstein, to ask you for a favor. In reply, you utter a number of calumnies against my son; and you evidently expect that I shall believe them. Well, you see, sir, I have known him, boy, and man, for a good many years now; and habit leads me to think that you have been uttering a series of audacious falsehoods. You will bear with my candor, as I bore with yours. And let me add a piece of advice: when you next accuse a son to his father, be sure the son is present, or the father may think of the accuser—what I need not suggest to you. Good-morning."

Wherewith the old man walked out of the room, and down the broad stairs, and out of the great empty house. He was a little angry, doubtless, and there was a contemptuous curl on his lips as he strode down the street; but these feelings soon subsided into a gentler sadness as he thought of Dove and the chances of her getting country air.

He looked up at the large houses on both sides of him, and thought how the owners of these houses had only to decide between one sheltered sea-side village and another, between this gentle climate and that gentler one, for pleas-

ure's sake, while he, with the health of his darling in the balance, was tied down to the thick and clammy atmosphere of the streets. And then he thought of how many a tramp, footsore and sickeningly hungry, must have looked up at Chestnut Bank and wondered why God had given all his good things—sweet food, and grateful wine, and warm clothing, and pleasant society, and comfortable sleep—to the occupant of that pleasant-looking place. It was now his turn to be envious; but it was for Dove alone that he coveted a portion of their wealth.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DECISION.

DARK as was the night on which Will and Annie Brunel had wandered along the lonely pavements of Kensington, they had not escaped observation. On whatever errand he was bent, Count Schönstein happened to be down in that neighborhood on this night; and while these two were so much engaged in mutual confidences as scarcely to take notice of any passer-by, the Count had perceived them and determined to watch them.

This he did during the whole of the time they remained outside. What he gathered from his observations was not much. At another time he would have paid little attention to their walking together for an hour or two; but that at this very time, when she was supposed to be considering whether she would become the Count's wife, she should be strolling about at night with one who was evidently on very intimate terms with her—this awakened the Count's suspicions and wrath. But the more he watched, the more he was puzzled. They did not bear the demeanor of lovers; yet what they said was evidently of deep interest to them both. There was no self-satisfied joy in their faces—rather an anxious and tender sadness; and yet they seemed to find satisfaction in this converse, and were evidently in no hurry to return to the house.

Once Miss Brunel had returned to the house, the Count relinquished further watch. He therefore did not witness Will's recall. But he had seen enough greatly to disquiet him; and as he went homeward he resolved to have a clear understanding with Miss Brunel on the following morning. He believed he had granted her sufficient time to make up her mind; and, undoubtedly, when he came to put the question point-blank, he found that her mind was made up.

Briefly, she gave him to understand that she never could, and that she never would, be his wife. Perhaps she announced her determination all the more curtly in that her sorrow for the loss of Mrs. Christmas seemed to render the Count's demand at such a moment an insult.

The poor Count was in a dreadful way. In this crisis he quite forgot all about the reasons which had first induced him to cultivate Annie

Brunel's society, and honestly felt that if her present decision were persevered in, life was of no further use or good to him.

"I am sorry," she said, "I have given you pain. But you asked me to speak plainly, and I have done so."

"You have so astonished me—your tone when we last saw each other at least gave me the right to anticipate—"

"There I have to beg for your forgiveness. I was very wrong. I did not know my own mind—I could come to no decision."

"May I venture to ask what enabled you to come to a decision?"

"I would rather not answer the question," she replied, coldly.

"Will you tell me if your mind was made up yesterday morning?" he asked, insidiously.

"It was not. But pray, Count Schönstein, don't say any thing more about this at present. Consider the position I am in just now—"

"I only wish to have a few words from you for my further guidance, Miss Brunel," he said.

"You came to this decision last night. Last night you saw Mr. Anerley. Have I not a right to ask you if he had any thing to do with it?"

"You have no such right," she said, indignantly.

"Then I take your refusal to mean that he had. Are you aware that he is engaged to be married? Do you know that he is a beggar, and his father also? Do you know—"

"I hope I may be allowed to be free from insult in my own house," she said, as she rose and—with a wonderful dignity, and pride, and grace that abashed and awed him—walked out of the room.

A dim sort of compunction seized him, and he would willingly have followed her and begged her to pardon what he had said. Then he, too, felt a little hurt, remembering that he was a Count, and she an actress. Finally, he quietly withdrew, found a servant at the door waiting to let him out, and departed from the house with a heavy heart.

"A woman's 'No' generally means 'Yes,'" he said to himself, disconsolately trying to extract comfort from the old proverb.

He would not despair. Perhaps the time had been inopportune. Perhaps he should have postponed the crisis, when he learned of Mrs. Christmas's death. Then he reflected that he had been so intent on his own purpose as to forget to offer the most ordinary condolences.

"That is it," he said. "She is offended by my having spoken at such a time."

The Count was a shifty man, and invariably found hope in the mere fact of having something to do. There was yet opportunity to retrieve his blunder. So he drove to the office of Cayley and Hubbard, and found his meek brother sitting in his room.

"I never come to see you except when I am in trouble," said the Count, with a grim smile.

"I am always glad to see you, Frederick. What is your trouble now?"

"Oh, the old affair. She has left the theatre, as you know; she has lost that old woman; she is quite alone and penniless; and, this morning, when I offered to make her my wife, she said No."

"What were her reasons?"

"A woman never has any. But I think I vexed her in making the proposal when the corpse was lying in the next room. It was rather rum, wasn't it? And then she had been crying, and very likely did not wish to be disturbed. However, I don't despair. No. Look at her position. She *can't live* unless she accepts assistance from me."

"Unless—"

Mr. John Hubbard did not complete the sentence, but his face twitched more nervously than ever.

"Who *could* tell her?" asked the Count, angrily.

"She may get assistance from those other people—"

"The Anerleys?" replied the Count, with a splendid laugh. "Why, man, every penny of old Anerley's money is with Miall and Welling. Safe keeping there, eh? Bless you, she has no alternative—except this, that she's sure to run off and disappear suddenly in some wild attempt at becoming a governess. I know she means something that way."

"And then you'll lose sight of her," said the thin-faced brother, peering into the slip of gray sky visible through the small and dusty window.

What *his* thoughts were at this moment he revealed to his wife at night.

"My dear," he said, in dulcet tones, "I am afraid my brother is a very selfish man, and wants to get this poor girl's money. If she were to become friends with *us*, we might guard her against him. Indeed, it might only be fair to tell her what money awaits her whenever she chooses to take it; and perhaps, you know, Jane, she might give a little present to the children, out of gratitude, you know."

"A few thousand pounds would be nothing to *her*, John," said the wife, thinking of her darling boys.

"And Fred's money he's sure to keep to himself. He seems to have no idea that his family have claims upon him."

However, to return to the Count, he then proceeded to unfold to his brother the plan he had conceived for the entrapping of this golden-crested wren which was so likely to fly away.

"All the little money she may have saved will be swallowed up in the funeral expenses. After that—what? Music-lessons, or French, or something. Very good. I know she has been already watching the advertisements in the *Times*. Now what I want you to do is this—publish an advertisement which will attract her attention, and secure her as a governess."

The two men had thought of the same thing, at the same moment, each for his own purpose. But John Hubbard suddenly began to fear that

he would be made a cat's-paw of by his more favored brother.

"The name, Frederick, might suggest to her—"

"I don't think she knows my personal name," said the Count, coldly. "Besides, you would not advertise as Cayley and Hubbard, which might remind her of *one* resource open to her, and you would not advertise as my brother, which would frighten her away. Let Jane advertise—she will do it better than either of us; and if it is necessary to get rid of your present governess, you can give her some small *solatium*, which I will repay you."

This was the advertisement which was finally concocted between them:

"Wanted, a Governess. Must be thoroughly proficient in music and French. One who could assist in arranging private theatricals preferred. Apply," etc., etc.

It was submitted by Mr. John Hubbard to the inspection of his wife; and the mild, fat, pretty little woman approved of it.

"That is how I fancy we might get acquainted with her, my dear; and you know Frederick dare not come near the house at first, or she would be frightened away at once. Then, you know, we could be very kind to her, and make her grateful. She ought to be grateful, considering her position."

Jane acquiesced, but was not hopeful. She had heard her husband frequently speak of the strange things he encountered in his professional career; but she had never herself seen any of them. She did not believe, therefore, that any portion of a romance could be enacted in her prosaic house.

"It would be very nice," she said to her husband, "if it all came right; and we were to be friends with such a rich lady, and if she would only give the children something to make them independent of their uncle Frederick. I'm not fond of money for its own sake; but for the children, my dear—"

"Yes, the children are to be considered," said John, wondering whether his pretty, placid, good-natured little wife believed that he believed that she believed what she said.

"I am sure a lady so well-born will be a charming companion," said Mrs. John, "whether she has been an actress or not."

"And we must change the sherry," said her husband.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONFESSION.

By the time that Mrs. Anerley arrived, Dove was sufficiently well to suffer removal from the hotel; and as there was now no help for it, the whole family removed to those rooms which Will had engaged for them from his landlord. The position of affairs had now to be disclosed; and with all the cheerfulness and mutual consolation they could muster, the prospect seemed doleful

enough. Every one seemed to be chiefly concerned for Dove, and Dove was the least concerned of all. She put her arm round Mr. Anerley's neck, as he bent over the couch on which she lay, and whispered to him,

"You have lost all your shooting, poor papa."

"Yes."

"But then you have me. I'm as good as the biggest partridge you ever saw, am I not?"

"I think you are, darling."

"And you have lost all your fishing, poor papa."

"Yes, that too."

"But did you ever get a trout to kiss you as I do?"

Which was followed by the usual caress.

"And you won't have such lots of wine; but you know, papa, how angry you used to be when people did not appreciate what *you* thought was good."

"And where is my little Dove to get her port-wine after dinner on Sunday?" said he.

"You'll see, papa. Just after dinner, when we're all sitting at the table, and you are looking sadly at the dry walnuts, and every body is thinking about the nice Sundays down in the country, you know, there will be a little rustling, and a little murmur of music in the air—somewhere near the roof—and all at once two bottles of wine will be hung round your neck by the fairies—for it's only you who care about it, you know—and every body will laugh at you. That is the punishment for thinking about port-wine. Do I want port-wine. You're an old cheat, papa, and try to make me believe I am ill that you may have your port-wine on Sunday. But I'm not, and I won't have any extravagance."

He, with a great pain at his heart, saw the forced look of cheerfulness on her sweet face, and made some abominable vow about selling his mother's marriage-ring before Dove should want her port-wine.

Dove was really so well, however, when Mrs. Anerley came, that the anxious and tender mamma was almost at a loss how to expend the care and sympathy with which she had charged herself. It was at this juncture that Will proposed that Mr. and Mrs. Anerley should go and see Annie Brunel, and give her what comfort and assistance lay in their power. And no sooner were the circumstances of the girl's position mentioned, than both at once, and gladly, consented.

"But why not come with us?" said his mother.

"I would rather you went by yourselves. She will be only too grateful if you go to see her. She does not know how to manage a funeral. Then she is alone; you will be able to speak to her better than I, and in any case I must remain with Dove."

So they went, and when they were gone Dove asked him to come and seat himself beside her couch. She put out her little white hand to him, and he noticed that her eyes were singularly large and clear. They were fixed upon him with the old tender sadness, and he was forced

to think of the time when heaven itself seemed open to him in those beautiful, transparent depths. But why should they be sad? He remembered the old delight of them, the mystery of them, the kindness of them; and perhaps he thought that in a little time he would be able to awaken the old light in them, and rejoice in the gladness, and be honestly, wholly in love with his future wife.

"Why didn't you go with them?" she asked.

"And leave you alone?"

He could have wished that those eyes were less frank and less penetrating.

"Sometimes I fancy, Will, that you think me a great baby, and that there is no use explaining things to me, and that I am only to be petted and treated like a child. And so you have always petted me, like the rest, and I liked it very well, as you know. But if I am to be your wife, Will, you mustn't treat me as a child any more."

"Would you like to be old and wise and motherly, Dove? How must I treat you? You know you are only a poor little child, my dearest; but then when we marry, you will suddenly grow very old."

There was no glad pleasure and hope in his voice, and doubtless she caught the tone of his speech, for the large eyes were absent and troubled.

"You are not frank with me, Will," she said, in a low voice. "You won't explain the difference there has been in you ever since you came back from Germany. Ah, such a difference!" she added, with a sigh, and her eyes were withdrawn from his face. "Perhaps I only imagine it, but every thing seems altered. We are not to each other what we used to be: you are kinder than ever, I think, and you want to be what you were; but something has come between us, Will."

Every word she uttered lacerated his heart, for how could he look upon the patient, kind, sweet face, and tell a lie?—and how dared he tell the truth?

"Come closer, Will. Bend your head down, and I'll whisper something to you. It is this: Ever since you came back from Germany I have been wretched without knowing why. Many a time I was going to tell you; then you always looked as if you were not as much my friend as you used to be, and I dared not do it. You have not been frank with me, and I have seen it often and often as I have watched you, and my heart used to lie cold and still like lead. And oh, Will, do you know what I've been thinking—I've been thinking that you don't love me any more!"

She turned away her agonized face from him, and a slight shudder ran through her frame.

"Dove, listen to me—"

"And if it is true, Will," she said, with trembling lips, her face still being turned from him, "if it is true, don't tell me that it is, Will; how could I bear to hear you say that? I should only wish to die at once, and be out of

every body's way—out of your way, too; Will, if I am in the way. I never expected to talk like this to you—never, never; for I used to think—down there in St. Mary-Kirby, you know—that you could never do any thing but love me, and that we should always go on the same wherever we were. But things are all changed, Will. It never was the same after you left the last time, and since you have come back, they have changed more and more. And now up here in London, it seems as if all the old life were broken away, and we two had only been dreaming down there. And I have been sick at heart, and wretched; and when I found myself ill the other day, I wished I might die."

He had destroyed that beautiful world; and he knew it, although there was no chorus of spirits to sing to him:

"Weh! weh!
Du hast sie zerstört,
Die schöne Welt!
Mit mächtiger Faust;
Sie stürzt, sie zerfällt!"
* * * *

Prüchtiger
Baue sie wieder
In deinen Busen baue sie auf!
Neuen Lebenslauf
Beginne,
Mit hellem Sinne
Und neue Lieder
Tönen darauf!"

Was it possible for him to build it up again, and restore the old love and the old confidence? It was not until this heart-broken wail was wrung from the poor girl that he fully saw the desolation that had fallen upon them. Bitterly he accused himself of all that had happened, and vainly he looked about for some brief solace he might now offer her.

"You don't say any thing," she murmured, "because you have been always kind to me, and you do not wish to pain me. But I know it is true, Will, whether you speak or not. Every thing is changed now—every thing; and—and I've heard, Will, that when one is heart-broken, one dies."

"If you do not wish to break my heart, Dove, don't talk like that," he said, beside himself with despair and remorse. "See, give me your hand, and I'll tell you all about it. Turn your eyes to me, dearest. We are a little changed, I know; but what does it matter? So soon as ever we can, we shall marry, Dove; and then the old confidence will come back again. I have been away so much from you that we have lost our old familiarity; but when we are married, you know—"

Then she turned, and the beautiful violet eyes were once more reading his face.

"You wish us to be married, Will?"

"My darling, I do," he said, eagerly, honestly, joyously—for in the mere thought that thereby he might make some reparation there lay peace and assurance for the future. "I wish that we could be married to-morrow morning."

She pressed his hand, and lay back on the

cushion with a sigh. There was a pale, wan pleasure in her face, and a satisfied languor in her eyes.

"I think I shall make a very good wife," she said, a little while after, with the old smile on her face. "But I shall have to be petted, and cared for, and spoiled, just as before. I don't think I should wish to be treated differently if I knew you were frank with me, and explained your griefs to me, and so on. I wished, darling, to be older, and out of this spoiling, because I thought you considered me such a baby—"

"You will be no longer a baby when you are married. Think of yourself as a married woman, Dove!—the importance you will have—the dignity you will assume. Think of yourself presiding over your own tea-table—think of yourself choosing a house down near Hastings, and making wonderful arrangements with the milkman, and the butcher, and getting into a terrible rage when they forget your orders, and blaming all their negligence on me."

"My dear, I don't think I shall have any thing to do with butchers and milkmen."

"Why?"

"Because I don't think you will ever have any money to pay them with."

"So long as I have only one arm with which to work for you, Dove, you must learn to live on little; but still—"

"I shall not want much, shall I, if I have you beside me to make me forget that I am hungry? But it all looks like a dream, just like what is past. Are they both dreams, dearest? Were those real times down in the old house, when you and I used to sit together, or walk out together, over the common, you know, and over the bridge by the mill-head, and away over the meadows down by that strip of wood, and so on, and so on, until we came to the river again, and the road, and Balnacluth House, and the deer-park. How pleasant it was, in the summer evenings; but that seems so long ago!"

"How sad you have been these last few days, Dove!"

"Because I have been thinking, Will. And all that seems a dream, and all that is coming seems a dream, and there is nothing real but just now, and then I find you and me estranged from each other. Ah, yes, Will, you are very kind in speaking of our marriage; but we are not now what we were once."

"Dove," he said, with a desperate effort, "I can not bear this any longer. If you go on moping like this, you will kill yourself. It is better you should know all the truth at once—you will listen, dearest, and forgive me, and help me to make the best we can of the future."

There was a quick sparkle of joy in her eyes.

"Oh, Will, Will, are you going to tell me all now?"

"Yes, dearest."

"Then you needn't speak a word—not a word—for I know you love me after all. Perhaps not altogether; but quite enough to satisfy me, Will, and I am so glad—so glad."

She burst into tears, and hid her face from him.

He scarcely knew whether grief or joy was the cause of this emotion; but in a minute or two she said,

"I am going to whisper something to you. You fell in love with Miss Brunel when you were over in Germany, and you found it out when it was too late, and you did not know what to do. Your kindness brought you back to me, though your thoughts were with her. Is it not all true I have been telling you? And I was afraid it would be so always, and that you and I were parted forever; for you hid the secret from me, and dared not tell me. But the moment I saw in your eyes that you were going to tell me, I knew some of the old love must be there—some of our old confidence; and now—now—oh, my darling, I can trust you with my life, and my heart, and all the love I can offer you."

"You have spoken the truth, Dove," he said, and he knew that her supreme womanly instinct had not lied to her, "and you have made me happier than I have been for many a day. You do not blame me much for what is past and gone? And you see that after all the old love may come back between us; and you will help me to bring it back, and keep it safe."

"And I will be a true wife to you, Will."

She fixed her eyes gravely and earnestly upon him. Then she lifted his hand to her lips, and—bethinking herself, perhaps, of some quaint foreign custom of which she may have heard—she kissed it, in token of meek submission and wifely self-surrender.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BAIT IS TAKEN.

Mrs. ANERLEY felt very nervous in going to visit Miss Brunel. She had never seen an actress in private life; and, on the stage, this particular actress had seemed so grand and majestic—so thoroughly out of and beyond the ordinary sphere of every-day existence—that she almost feared to approach so glorious a creature.

She was very particular about her dress; and perhaps she inwardly composed a few phrases to break the difficulty of introduction.

But there was no awkwardness where Mr. Anerley was concerned. He went forward, and took the girl by the hand, and told her, in as gentle a way as possible, the object of their mission. She was apparently much touched by this sign of their thoughtfulness and goodness; and said so briefly. Mrs. Anerley forgot all her prepared little speeches. While her husband talked to Annie Brunel, she stood and watched the strange intensity of the girl's large, dark gray eyes. There was no embarrassment there, and no scanning of the embarrassment of others; they were too absent, and yet full of a strong personal feeling which showed itself as

she accepted, with great gratitude, Mr. Anerley's offer.

"There is one other thing you ought to do," he said. "Get away from the house at once."

"If we could only have asked you to come down to our house in the country for a few days," said Mrs. Anerley, in her kindly way, "that would have been the best thing for you, and a great pleasure to us."

"You would have asked me to visit your home?" said the young girl, suddenly flashing her clear, honest eyes on Mrs. Anerley's face.

"Yes—why not?" said Mrs. Anerley, almost in fright, fancying she had committed herself.

"You are very kind indeed," said Annie Brunel. "Actresses are not accustomed to such kindness—especially from strangers."

"But you mustn't call us strangers," said Mr. Anerley, good-naturedly. "We have the pleasure of knowing you very well; and in a few days we hope you will know something of us, if we can be of any service to you. To live in this house, alone, with these sad remembrances, is very unwise; and, in a day or two, you must leave it."

"Yes, I must leave it—because I must go where I can earn my bread. Has your son told you, sir, that I have left the stage? So I have; but at present I have no clear idea of what I must do—and yet I must do something."

"I am afraid you have placed yourself in a very perilous position," said Mr. Anerley.

"But I got to dislike the stage so much that I had to leave it."

"Why *you* should have left the stage!" exclaimed Mrs. Anerley, in open admiration, leaving the sentence unfinished.

Annie Brunel looked at her for a moment, and said slowly,

"I have been very fortunate in giving you a good impression of myself. I thought most ladies outside the theatre looked down upon us theatre folk; and I was afraid you had come here only at your son's solicitation, with a sort of—"

"Ah, don't say any more," said Mrs. Anerley, with a genuine pain on her face. "It is not right to judge of people like that. I wish I could only show you what Dove and I would like to do in taking you among us, and making you comfortable, until you should forget this sad blow."

"As for *her*," said Miss Brunel, with a smile, "I knew she was too gentle and good to despise any one, the moment I saw her. But she was so much sweeter and truer than ordinary women that I accounted for it on that ground; and I grew so fond of her in a few minutes. And you, too—what can I offer you for your goodness to me but my gratitude and my love!"

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Anerley, with a touch of moisture in the corner of her eyes, "I hope we may have some opportunity of proving to you what we think of you."

Mr. Anerley found that Will had explained to Miss Brunel the circumstances in which the family were now placed; so that he was relieved

from the embarrassment of saying that whatever aid he might give her would not be pecuniary aid. But he had not much experience yet of the girl to whom he was speaking—of the quaint plainness and directness of her speech, the very antithesis of the style and manner which Mrs. Anerley had expected to meet.

Annie Brunel told him what small savings she possessed, and asked him if these could be made to cover all the expenses of the funeral, so that she might start on her new career unencumbered with debt. He thought it might be done, and he at once assumed the management of the sad details of the business before them.

"But then," she said, "I have the servant to pay; and I don't know what arrangement I may be able to make with the landlord of the house. Hitherto he has been very obliging."

"That, also, I will look after," said Mr. Anerley, "if you can put confidence in a man who has so successfully managed his own affairs as to bring his whole family into poverty."

"And I? Can I do nothing for you?" said Mrs. Anerley. "We who are all suffering from some kind of trouble should be glad to accept help from each other. Now, tell me—the clothes you may want—what have you done?"

"I had just begun to look over some things when you came in."

"Shall I stay and help you until dinner-time? Do let me."

And so, whilst Mr. Anerley went off to see the landlord, Mrs. Anerley staid behind and lent her assistance to that work in which the feminine heart, even when overshadowed by a funeral, finds consolation and delight. And she afterward declared that she had never worked with a pleasanter companion than this patient, self-possessed and cheerful girl, whose queenly gestures, and rich voice, and dark clear face had so entranced and awed her when Juliet came upon the stage.

The two women became confidential with each other in the most natural and easy way. Mrs. Anerley entirely forgot the actress, and became wonderfully fond of and familiar with this quaint-mannered girl, with the splendid hair and the honest eyes.

"For my own part," she said to her, "I am not at all sorry that my husband has lost this money, if it were not likely to affect Dove's comfort. You know he is such a very good man, and the very kindest and best husband a woman could wish to have; but I can not tell you how it troubles me sometimes to think that he is not of the same religious opinions as the rest of us. That is the only thing; and I am sure it has been brought on by his being too well off, and having nothing to do but read and speculate. He has never been put in a position requiring that aid and comfort we get from religious service; and it is only carelessness, I am convinced, has led him away."

"And now you think this misfortune—"

"Not the misfortune all together, but the rougher fight he will have with the world. He

will be glad to have that sense of peace and rest with which people sit together in church, and forget their every-day troubles. If it will only do that for him—if it will only bring him back to us—I shall be glad that we have lost every penny we had in the world. It has been my trouble for years to think of his perilous state."

"He does not look like a man who would believe any thing dangerous."

"I hope not, I hope not," said the tender wife; "I hope it is not dangerous. And yet I shall never feel that he is safe until he returns to the old faith and opinions he had when I first knew him. Even then, when a very young man, I was never sure of him. But he was always so respectful to every kind of religion, whether he believed in it or not, that I—yes, I—took him on trust."

"You do not seem to have regretted your choice," said Annie Brunel.

"No," she said, with a pleased and proud smile, "you won't find many people live more comfortably than we. But there is that one thing, you see—"

"And your son—does he go with his father in these things?"

"I don't think so. I hope not. But both of them are such good men that I can't make up my mind to go and speak to them as if—as if they were sinners, you know."

A perplexed, humorous smile came over her face; and yet Annie saw that her friend was very much in earnest over this matter. It was the one bitter thing in this good woman's contented and peaceful lot.

After that interview Mrs. Anerley spent the better part of each day with her new protégée, and a wonderful love grew up between the two women, motherly and tender on the one side, trusting and childlike on the other. And for the first day or two Mr. Anerley paid far more attention to Annie Brunel's affairs than he did to his own, until Mrs. Christmas was hidden away from a world that had perhaps not been over kind to her, and until the young girl was ready to go forth and seek her own existence. Will, during this time, never came near. He was trying to repair the beautiful world that he had shattered, and he kept faithfully to the task.

Finally, there came the question as to how Annie Brunel was to earn a living, and the *Times* was again called into requisition. Many a weary hour did Mrs. Anerley and her charge spend in reading through the advertisements, and writing letters in reply to those which seemed most suitable. No answer came to any one of these applications. For some reason or other they had not thought it worth while to reply to the advertisement about music, French, and private theatricals; but at last the pertinacity with which the lines appeared in the newspaper drew discussion down upon them.

"If I were to be asked how I became proficient in theatricals, I should have to say I was on the stage; and I don't wish to do that."

"Why, dear?"

"Because the people might say they did not wish to have an actress in the house, and I want to avoid the insult."

"My dear, you have the absurdest notions. If they have seen you on the stage, they will be all the more delighted to have you. It was because you were an actress, I firmly believe, that I came to see you; and in a few days I have made a daughter of you."

"Nobody seems inclined to answer my letters," said the girl, ruefully.

"You may wait, and wait, for months," said Mrs. Anerley. "Add this one to the number, and tell them who you are. But you must tell them that you only want a small salary, or they will never think of engaging you."

So the letter was written in accordance with these suggestions, and posted with several others. By that night's post—and the exceeding swiftness of the response might have provoked some suspicion in less unworldly minds—there came a letter. Annie Brunel was alone. She saw by the unknown handwriting that the letter was likely to be a reply to one of her applications; and for a minute or two she allowed the envelope to remain unopened, while she wondered what sort of destiny lay folded within it.

These were the words she read:

"Rose Villa, Haverstock Hill, October 29, 18—.

"Mrs. John Hubbard presents compliments to Miss Brunel; is exceedingly obliged by the offer of her valuable assistance, and would Miss Brunel be good enough to call, at her convenience, any forenoon between ten and two? Mrs. Hubbard hopes that if Miss Brunel can be induced to accept the situation which lies at her disposal, nothing will be wanting to render her position in the house more that of a friend than an instructress. Mrs. Hubbard hopes her proposal, when properly explained to Miss Brunel, will meet with Miss Brunel's favorable consideration."

This to a governess! The girl scarcely knew how to regard the letter—so familiar, so respectful, so anxious.

"Here is another person who does not object to my being an actress. And I am to be her friend."

She came to the conclusion that a lady who could so write to a perfect stranger, must either be mad, or have an idea that, in asking Annie Brunel to her house, it was Juliet or Rosalind who might be expected to come.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE NEW GOVERNESS.

It was a cold, wet day, in the beginning of November, when Annie Brunel got out of the Hampstead bus, and found herself in the muddy highway of Haverstock Hill. A wet and cheerless day, with a damp and cutting wind, and a perpetual drizzling rain that made the black stems of the leafless trees glisten and drip; a

day to make the people who passed each other in the street, vainly muffled-up against the wet and the keen cold, hate each other with a vague and gratuitous hatred. There was scarcely a traveller on foot who did not regard all others in similar plight as somehow responsible for the contrariety of the elements.

"What a pity you should have come to day?" cried Mrs. John Hubbard, as she came into the hall to receive her visitor. "I would rather you had broken a dozen appointments. I hope you are not wet. I hope you are not cold. Come into the drawing-room at once; there is a nice warm fire to bring the blood to your fingers again."

During this speech Annie Brunel had time to examine her future mistress. She was not obviously mad. Indeed, the coal-black hair, the rosy cheeks, the small and pretty mouth, the neat figure and small hands, were the natural ornaments of a person who seemed mentally far too colorless and contented ever to be troubled by intellectual derangement. Yet the new governess was as much puzzled by her reception as by the letter she had received.

"There, now, take this easy-chair—let me draw it in for you—and we shall have a chat over the matter. I have hitherto only had a morning governess, you know; the poor girl took unwell some time ago, and she has not been here for some days now."

At this precise moment, Miss Betham was upstairs, packing her music and preparing for final departure. But to the good-natured and mentally limp Mrs. Hubbard, lying came as easily as telling the truth. She would not have told a lie to secure a peculiar end; but in the course of conversation she did not seem to recognize the necessity of being exact in her statements. She lied broadly and often; but she lied harmlessly—at least she meant to do no harm by her lying.

"I won't ask you any questions, Miss Brunel, not one. You have your own reasons for leaving the stage; and I'm not going to quarrel with what enables me to have your assistance (if we can make arrangements, that is), which I don't doubt for a moment."

"I am quite inexperienced, as I told you in my letter—"

"Oh, that does not signify," said the other, affably.

Annie Brunel looked up with a glance of astonishment, which any woman, not a fool, would have noticed.

"And if you think that I know enough to attempt to get into the way of teaching, I shall leave all the other arrangements to you. I am not anxious about the salary you may be inclined to give me; because, after all, it is only a trial. And if you think I am worth to you, in the mean time, so much per week as will keep me in food and pay my lodgings—"

"Your lodgings! I could not think of submitting you to the misery of lodgings so long as I have a comfortable room to offer you."

Mrs. Hubbard did not look like a practical joker; but her reception of the new governess looked uncommonly like a practical joke.

"You are very kind," said Annie, the wide eyes being a little wider than usual; "but I thought it was as a day-governess—"

"To be sure, we have always had a day-governess. But in *your* case I should prefer a resident governess, especially if you are about to leave your home and take lodgings."

"I meant to take lodgings somewhere near you, if I had the good fortune to please you."

"In this neighborhood you couldn't get lodgings; and if you go down to Camden Town, or over to Kentish Town—Oh, my dear, I couldn't think of it. My husband is very particular about every body connected with us being treated fairly—like one of ourselves, you understand; and as soon as he heard of your being inclined to answer the advertisement, he said,

"I hope Miss Brunel will find a comfortable home here."

This was another lie—indeed what little intellect the poor woman had chiefly took the form of invention.

"I am not anxious to go into lodgings," said Annie Brunel, with a smile, "as I had a good deal of experience of them at one time."

"Shall we consider it settled then?"

"But you do not know whether I am fit for the duties you require."

"What an objection! I know you are."

"Then, as to terms—"

"We sha'n't quarrel about terms. Come and stay with us as soon as you can, and we'll make every thing comfortable and agreeable for you, and we'll settle about terms afterward. Then you know, we shall have private theatricals to amuse you."

In certain stories, and in not a few dramas, Annie Brunel had seen a perfect stranger suddenly determine to play the part of a special Providence toward the heroine; but she was lost in astonishment to meet that incomprehensible friend in real life. Here she was, however; and when it is manna that the clouds rain there is little reason in putting up an umbrella.

Mrs. Hubbard rang the bell, and sent a servant for the children. They came trooping down to the drawing-room, pushing each other, and looking very shy and a trifle sulky.

"This is the lady who will help you with your lessons now, my dears, since Miss Betham has gone."

"Miss Betham hasn't gone. She is up-stairs yet," said Master Alexander, "and she has just told Kate to fetch her her sherry."

"Ah, come to look after some music she has left behind, perhaps," said Mrs. Hubbard, with a significant nod to Annie.

"You will find the children very obedient," she continued, "and nothing shall be wanting to add to your comfort. May we conclude the bargain to be settled?"

"Certainly, so far as I am concerned," said the girl.

These were the agreeable tidings which awaited Mr. John Hubbard when he returned home that night.

"She is such a charming person," said his wife, "I don't wonder at your brother being fond of her."

"He is fond of her money," said John Hubbard, gloomily, "and fancies himself sure of it now."

"It would be very wicked to take advantage of the girl's innocence in any way," said Mrs. Hubbard, a proposition to which her husband assented.

"But if we can touch her *gratitude*, my dear," said he, "there is no saying, as I told you before, what might happen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

ANOTHER BLUNDER.

THE old year died out; the new one came in— not attended with any very bright auspices for the persons concerned in this story. John Hubbard was, perhaps, the only one of them who was pleased with present events, and hopeful for the future. During many a secret conclave with his good-natured, pretty, limp, and lying little wife, he speculated on what shape his governess's gratitude would ultimately assume.

Mr. Anerley had not succeeded in getting any employment. Several times he was offered certain situations, and was on the point of accepting, when his son peremptorily forbade any such notion.

"If you can get proper employment, and proper remuneration," said Will, "well and good; if not, the pound or two you would get would not compensate for the trouble and ignominy of such a position."

Will's voice in the matter was powerful, for he was supporting the household with such exertions as he was yet permitted to make. The old man did not think of trouble or ignominy. He thought only of Dove, and the numerous little luxuries to which she was accustomed. Nor dared he speak of this, except to his wife; for both saw the perpetual endeavors that Will was making for all of them. Sometimes the old man distrusted the audacious cheerfulness with which Will insisted on his mother and Dove having this or that particular luxury; and once he made a discovery that led him to think retrospectively of many things.

Down in St. Mary-Kirby, there was no home-entertainment which afforded Dove so much pleasure as having red mullet and champagne for supper; and the disgraceful little epicure picked so daintily her tiny morsel of fish, and sipped so quaintly, with coquettish eyes thrown at her father, her glass of wine, that to the other people the feast was much more æsthetic than sensuous.

"Mother," said Will, one evening, when he came home (but his words were directed to

Dove), "we haven't had red mullet for supper for a long time. I've brought home some; and I've brought home a small case of champagne for the special use of people who behave themselves."

"Oh, Will!" said the mother, "what extravagance!"

"The boy's mad!" said the father.

"Do you hear them, Dove? Now they have misconducted themselves, you and I shall have all the champagne to ourselves."

What a merry little party it was, that evening! The landlord of the house lent them the proper wine-glasses; Dove went and put on part of the blue pearl head-dress the Count had given her, to make believe she had been at the theatre; and when they sat down at the bright white cloth, with every thing on the table as brilliant and clean as fingers could make it, it was quite like old times.

"Now, Will," said Mr. Anerley, "let's see what you've brought. Mind you, my taste isn't dulled by want of exercise."

"I didn't consider your taste a bit, sir. I got the wine for Dove, and it is as sweet as—"

"Herself! These young people are too bashful to pay compliments nowadays. Ah, Dove, don't these bits of blue paper hold wonders within them—the treasures of the deep—the only fish worth calling a fish—and every one of them with a diamond ring in its mouth. Here, Will, give me your ring, that I may see how it looks on the nose of this famous fellow which I mean to give to Dove."

The young man darted a hasty, deprecating look toward his father, and the blood rushed over his face. The father caught that swift look, and glanced at the finger on which Will generally wore this ring—one he had brought from Turkey. There was no ring there; it had been there that morning.

Mr. Anerley did not enjoy the supper. Sometimes the fish seemed to stick in his throat; and the wine had a bitter flavor.

But he did not spoil the enjoyment of the others; and Dove's delight at recalling one of the old bygone evenings was immense. She persisted in making believe that they had been to the theatre; and criticised the actors gravely and severely. She pecked at her little piece of fish like a thrush at a ripe white cherry; and she wore on her pretty, small, blue-veined wrist a wonderful bracelet that Will had brought her from abroad.

"Shall I kiss the goblet for you, Sir Knight?" she said, taking a little sip out of Will's glass.

"And yours, venerable sir?"

"It seems to me," said Mr. Anerley, "that the old custom was a system of levying black mail on all the wine-glasses round. Still, I will pay the price. * * Well, now, it isn't bad wine; but the bouquet is clearly owing to you, Dove."

"I didn't like the lover to-night," said Dove, critically. "He seemed as if his clothes were quite new. I can't bear a lover coming with new clothes, and trying to make an effect. A

lover should forget his tailor when he is in love. And I am against people being married in new clothes, with bridesmaids in new clothes, and every body in new clothes, and every body feeling cramped, and stiff, and embarrassed. When I marry, I shall have my husband wear the old, old suit in which I used to see him come home from his work! the clothes which I've got to love about as much as himself. I sha'n't have the tailor come between him and me."

"The heroine was rather pretty," hazarded Will, concerning the imaginary play.

"Well, yes. But she made love to us, and not to him. And I can't bear kissing on the stage—before such a lot of people—why don't they do all that before they come on the stage, and then appear as engaged or married?"

"But you would have to employ a chorus to come and explain to the audience what was going on in the 'wings,'" said Will.

And so they chatted, and gossiped, and laughed, and it seemed as if they were again down in the old and happy Kentish valley.

When they had retired for the night, Mr. Anerley told his wife his suspicions about the ring.

"I was afraid he had done something like that," she said. "But who could regret it, seeing Dove so delighted? I hope he won't do it again, however. I should tell him of it but that I know he will be vexed if we mention it."

By common consent the case of champagne was relegated to the grand occasions of the future. The family was not in a position to pay a wine merchant's bill; and so they remained contented with the knowledge that on any sudden prompting they had it in their power to become extravagant and luxurious.

Then Dove was better, so far as they could see; and they bore their little hardships with wonderful equanimity. She was better, doubtless; but she was very delicate; and the doctor had had a long and serious conversation with Mr. Anerley, in which he was advised to take Dove to spend the rest of the winter in Italy. Sirius was quite as possible a destination.

By this time Annie Brunel had become familiar with the Hubbard family, and had definitely entered upon her new duties. The longer she staid in the house, the more she was puzzled by the consideration with which every one, except her pupils, treated her; and even they were impertinent not through intention but by habit. Mrs. Hubbard was almost obtrusively affectionate toward her governess. Every thing was done to make her residence in the house agreeable. She lunched and dined with Mrs. Hubbard, so that poor Miss Betham's sherry was never called into requisition. When there was a dinner-party or a dance in the house, Annie Brunel was invited as a guest, introduced to visitors as a guest, treated with all the courtesy due to a guest. She was never asked to sing by the Hubbards; although she played and sang enough at the solicitation of other people. The children were taught to consider her, not as a

governess, but as a friend of their mamma's. When there were people at the house, they were obliged to treat her as a gracious and distinguished lady who had come to spend the evening, not as a poor governess expected to find correct accompaniments for people who gratuitously changed the key three or four times in the course of a song.

As a governess, she ought to have been very grateful for such treatment. Yet she felt far from happy or contented. She did not like the pale, round-shouldered, nervous man who never looked one in the face. Despite the gratitude she could not but feel toward Mrs. Hubbard, she did not admire or love much that lady, whose unnecessary mendacity she had once or twice discovered. Here, however, was a home. Outside, the cold elements, the chiller hearts of strangers, the vicissitudes, trials, struggles, martyrdom of a fight for life; inside, warmth and comfort, apparently true friends, and easy duties. She tried to be grateful for all these things; and when moods of lonely despair and melancholy overwhelmed her, she upbraided her own weakness, and resolved to be more thankful in the future.

The Count had not ventured to go near her. He was satisfied to know that she was in safe keeping. He could bide his time. He had made one blunder; he would not again commit the mistake of forcing marital concerns upon her while she was moved by grief for the loss of an old friend. He allowed the slow passing days and weeks to work for him; trusting that in time he would only have to step in and reap the rich harvest his prudence had prepared.

But he called frequently at the office of his brother, to receive reports. And the tone of the Count, on one or two occasions, was sufficient to stir up a mild remonstrance from even that patient and much-enduring person.

"You talk to me as if you had paid me to engage her and keep her in the house for you."

"Did you engage her for yourself? You know I suggested the thing to you; and am prepared to reimburse you for any extra expense you may have been put to."

"I declare," said the milder brother, "you talk as if you were fattening a pig, and I was watching the yard. You come and look over the palings, and gloat over your future satisfaction, and compliment me if the prospect is pleasing to you. Mind you, I don't think you have any supreme claim on the girl."

"Have you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, what's the use of talking nonsense, Jack? If I marry her, it will be as good for you as for me."

"How?" said the lawyer, coldly, and with affected carelessness.

"Well," replied the Count, with some embarrassment, "there's the money, you see, coming into the family. That's a great matter."

"Yes, to you," said John Hubbard.

The Count looked at him for a moment; perhaps a thought struck him just then that, after

all, his brother might be sincere in his view of the matter, and might testify his sincerity by carrying off the prize for himself.

"Gad, he can't do that very well," said the Count to himself, with a merry laugh, when he came to reflect on the conversation, "or what would Jane say? The girl is useless to him, so what's the use of his talking nonsense? Her money is safe from him, if safe from any body."

But the more the Count thought over the affair, the less did he like the tone that his brother had lately assumed in talking of Annie Brunel. Further, he would have been as well pleased had he known that Miss Brunel was not *quite* so comfortable in his brother's house.

These things were the subject of much conjecture and calculation on his part. They were also the theme of his after-dinner musings. Now, after-dinner dreams and resolves are very beautiful at times; but they should never be put down on paper. In an evil hour—it was one evening after he had dined, all by himself, in that great house down in Kent—he placed the following words in a letter to his brother:

"Balmalnuith House, near St. Mary-Kirby, }
Jan. 17, 18—

"DEAR JOHN,—Let me add a word to what I recently said about Miss Brunel. It is *your* interest to forward *my* interest, as you will discover. Now, I am afraid you are treating her with so much mistaken kindness that she will get to consider the position of governess pleasant. This is misleading her. She will only suffer for it afterward. Nothing like wholesome severity at the time—nothing. Hubert Anerley came to me and asked me to lend him some money and let him off a bargain about my brougham and a pair of horses. Did I? I knew it would only delude him with absurd hopes, and I said no; and so he accepted his fate, and I suppose has set about repairing a fortune lost by his own carelessness. That's *my* way, Jack; and you're too kind to the girl. Get Jane to try some wholesome severity—to teach her what a governess is—frighten her—threaten to turn her out without a character, or something of the sort. Any thing, so she is made to understand how insecure her position is. You understand? Then I step in, and our family becomes one of the richest in England. What do you say to that? Do it at once—and firmly. It will be better to be done *decisively*—*very decisively*—and *soon*.

"Your affectionate brother,

FRED. V. SCHÖNSTEIN."

Frederick von Schonstein should have seen his brother's face when that letter arrived. It was not an expressive face; but on this occasion there were several emotions clearly visible in it, and they were not of a mournful kind. Indeed, John Hubbard looked upon this letter as worth thousands of pounds to him. It was the key of the position. He showed it to his wife.

"What a brute!" she said, "to think of harming the poor girl. I have never liked your broth-

er, my dear, since he began to try to entrap this girl, but now I am beginning to hate him."

And doubtless Mrs. Hubbard imagined, quite honestly, that it was merely compassion for her charming and unprotected governess which provoked her mild wrath and contempt.

"Fred's a fool, my dear, or he wouldn't have written that letter."

"Why?"

"Don't you see?" observed the husband, proud of his superior masculine perspicacity; "when-ever he seeks to interfere with her or with our relations toward her, we have only to show her this letter, and I think that will considerably cook his goose."

It was not often that the meek and proper brother of the Count was tempted into slang; but on this great occasion, when a lucky chance had delivered every thing into his hands, he could not forbear.

Count Schönstein never waited for that course of severity which was to render Annie Brunel an easy capture. His solitary life at Balnacluth House was becoming more and more unbearable; and so, at length, he resolved to precipitate matters.

One forenoon, when he knew his brother would be out, he went up to Haverstock Hill. His sister-in-law was a little frightened by his appearance. She so far knew her own nature as to be aware that the Count had only to command and she would obey. *How* she wished that her husband were at home!

The Count was gracious, but firm. He begged her to grant him an interview with Miss Brunel, in tones which expressed his resolution to obtain the interview, whether his gentle sister-in-law agreed or not. For a moment a lie hovered on her lips; but probably she knew it would be of no avail; and so she only ventured on a remonstrance.

"If you do this now," said Mrs. John, "you will terrify her. She is not prepared. She does not know you are connected with us—"

"I can explain all these matters," said the Count, peremptorily.

"Very well," said his sister-in-law, meekly.

In a minute afterward, Annie Brunel entered the room. No sooner did she see who the visitor was, than a surprised, pleased light came into her eyes, and the heart of the Count leaped for joy. How beautiful she was to him then! The big bright eyes, the delicately-rounded chin, the pretty mouth, the fine, southern languor, and grace, and softness of her face and figure—and the cold, cheerless, empty desolation of Balnacluth House!

She shook hands with him.

"How did you discover me here?"

"Don't you know?" he asked. "Don't you know that Mrs. Hubbard is my sister-in-law—that her husband is my brother—have they never spoken of me?"

In an instant the whole thing was laid bare to her. She understood now the extraordinary courtesy of her mistress, she understood now the

references made by the children to the deer that their uncle Frederick kept—and the advertisement—she saw that that was a trap. The discovery shocked her a little; but it also nerved her. She knew she had been deceived; she was yet unaware of any purpose that the deception could serve; but she confronted the Count with an intrepid spirit, and looked him in the face.

That look terrified him. "Have I," he thought, "made another blunder?"

The next moment found him entering on a long series of explanations, entreaties, and superfluous assertions. It had all been done honestly. They were afraid she would be homeless. They had advertised out of friendly intention—in perfect good faith. He had refrained from visiting the house, lest she should consider herself persecuted. The Hubbards had not mentioned his name, fearing that even that might frighten her.

For a minute or two these rapid revelations and confessions somewhat confused her. But out of the blundering representations of the Count arose certain facts strong and clear as the daylight.

"That advertisement *was* a trap?" she said, fixing her large, honest eyes upon him.

"But, you see—"

"And they have been treating me kindly, and deceiving me at the same time, that you might come—"

"Don't say that," said the Count, deprecatingly. "They deceived you with the best intentions toward yourself. And have I not the same intentions? Look at your position—a governess, dependent on other people for your bread, liable to be out of a situation and starving at any moment, bound down to certain duties every day, and living a solitary, monotonous life. Then look at what you would be if you would only listen to me; you would have nothing to do but enjoy yourself from January to December—you would have every thing at your command—"

"I think I have heard quite enough, Count Schönstein," she said, firmly. "And you would have spared both of us some pain if you had taken the answer I gave you before."

"And that is your only answer?"

"It is."

"How can you be so cruel?—so unreasonable? What do you mean to do?"

"I mean to leave this house."

"Why?" he said, struck with astonishment.

"You need not ask me why. You have been a good friend to me, and I do not wish to part from you in anger. You have been kind to me. I am sorry it is impossible for me to ask you to see me again. I do not wish to see you again, or Mr. or Mrs. Hubbard, after what you have just told me."

She left the room, and the Count sat staring blindly before him, remotely conscious that something terrible had befallen him. The next thing he saw was Annie Brunel entering the

drawing-room, followed by Mrs. John. The younger lady was dressed in black, and had now her bonnet and shawl on.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Hubbard. "You astonish me. Deceive you? Never such a thought entered my head. And as for that advertisement, it was no trap at all, but addressed to all governesses. Of course we knew that you *might* see it, and we were very glad when you did see it; but that we intentionally deceived you, I appeal to Count Schönstein, Miss Brunel."

"What I know of these matters, Mrs. Hubbard, I have just learned from Count Schönstein," she said coldly. "I don't accuse any one. Perhaps you did nothing unusual. I don't know any thing about the customs among ladies. I have been brought up among another kind of people. Good-morning."

There was no resentment on the calm and beautiful face, nor the least touch of sarcasm in the low, soft voice. There was sadness, however—a resigned, patient sadness that smote the heart of both her auditors, and kept them silent there, while she went outside—into London, alone.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN OLD ADMIRER.

NELLY FEATHERSTONE was busy that night. The small room in which she sat working was littered with all sorts of beautiful dressmaking materials; and Nelly herself was diligently engaged—sewing heavy golden fringe upon a resplendent Venetian doublet of green satin, which had glimmerings of white and crimson silk across the chest, and white satin sleeves, tightened and crisped with gold. Indeed, the sheen of satin and glitter of gold lay all over the dingy little room. These were the raw material of the new grand burlesque; and Nelly, who made all her dresses herself, was famous for the historical accuracy of her costume. On this occasion, however, there was a green satin Glengarry lying on a chair, and green satin boots, with the heels not much bigger than a fourpenny-piece, on the table; and she wore on her fingers, to try their lustre, two large rings of cut glass, the one a shining emerald, the other a brilliant crimson.

When Annie Brunel tapped at the door and stepped in, Nelly threw all these things aside, and rushed to her old friend, and hugged and kissed her in her usual impulsive manner, with a dozen "my dears" to every sentence. Her friend's story was soon told; she wanted Nelly to help her to get some cheap lodgings in the neighborhood.

"And so you know where to come first when you're down in luck," said the girl, giving her another kiss, with the tears coming into her eyes—for Nelly's well-worn heart had still a true and tender throb in it. "So sit you down and take every thing off your mind—and share my

room to-night, and to-morrow we'll see about business. Give me your bonnet, there now. Poor dear mother Christmas!—and I'll give you something to do until supper time comes, and then we shall have a bit of cold mutton and bottled stout. Oh, I've had my trials, too, my dear, since I saw you."

"What's been the matter with you, Nelly? That young gentleman, I suppose—"

"Oh, yes, he's always at it. But thank goodness I've got rid of him at last."

"Quite sure?" said the other, with a smile.

"Oh, quite. Such a fearful row we had, my dear. First about lip-salve; he accused me of using that to make my lips red, when I declare I haven't used it for two years. Very well, just as we had made that up, you know, dear, we were walking along Oxford Street, and there was a match-boy amusing himself, opposite a public-house, with a lot of other boys, and he was dancing a very, *very* clever breakdown step, and I said I'd give my ears if I could do that, just in fun, you know; and, lor, the passion he got into! Stormed about my low tastes, abused the British drama, said I had no more sentiment than a clown, and then I ordered him off, and walked home by myself."

"And which of you was the most miserable, Nelly?"

"I miserable? Not I. That very night Mr. Helstone sent me the most beautiful little speech about politics and other stuff, and Mr. Melton says I may use it in my part."

"You'll break that young gentleman's heart, Nelly. Indeed, it is a shame—"

"Nonsense! But I'll have my revenge upon him this time for his quarrelling with me. You see this is a boy's dress. I've made the skirt of it two inches shorter than I should have done. There. And I shall be in tights; and dance a breakdown; and sing a music-hall song; and when the lime-light comes on at the end, *I'll stare into it as hard as ever I can.*"

"But why should you injure your eyes?"

"To provoke him. He will be there. And he hates to see me in a boy's dress; and he hates to see me dance—"

"But I thought you were never to see him again."

"Neither I shall. Never."

Miss Featherstone's landlady tapped at the door, and entered with a letter.

"Please, miss, he says he's sorry to trouble you, but is there an answer?"

Nelly hurriedly ran over the letter, and there was a wicked smile of triumph on her face.

"It's *him*," she said to her companion.

"Would you like to see him? Shall I ask him to come up, since you are here?"

"By all means."

"Mrs. Goddridge, tell him I have a friend with me, and he may come up, if he likes."

Blushing, delighted, shamefaced, embarrassed, and yet radiant with joy, Mr. Frank Glyn was introduced to Annie Brunel. He was a good-looking, slightly-built young fellow, with a

sensitive cast of face, pleasant, large, blue eyes, and a certain tenderness about the lines of the mouth which boded ill for his future reminiscences of his acquaintance with Miss Nelly Featherstone. That young person should have been flirted with by a man of stronger metal than Frank Glyn.

"I hope I am not disturbing you," he said nervously, looking at the table.

"I hope you are in a better temper than when I last saw you," said she.

"We may let bygones be bygones now, Nelly. It wouldn't do to fight before Miss Brunel. She might have a strange impression of us."

"I think you are two foolish children," said Annie Brunel, "who don't spend a peaceable life when you might."

"I say, so too," said Nelly. "Life is not so long, as I have told him, that we can afford to throw it away in quarrels. And yet he *will* quarrel. Confess that you always do quarrel, Frank. There's only one person in the world who is always good to me; and I do so love him! When the dear old gentleman who made me these boots brought them home, and when I looked at them, I could have thrown my arms round his neck."

"I dare say you could, without looking at the boots," said her lover, with a fierce and terrible sneer.

"I suppose it's a weakness," said Nelly, with philosophic equanimity, "but I confess that I love a pair of beautiful, little, bright, neat, soft, close-fitting boots better than any man I ever saw."

She caught up that charming little pair of gleaming boots, and pressed them to her bosom, and folded her hands over them, and then took them and kissed them affectionately before placing them again on the table.

An awful thunder-cloud dwelt on poor Frank's brow.

"I shall take them to bed with me," said the young lady, with loving eyes still on the small heels and the green satin, "and I'll put them underneath my pillow, and dream of them all the night through."

Mr. Glyn got up. There was a terrible look in his eyes, and a terrible, cold harshness in his voice, as he said,

"I am interrupting your work and your conversation, ladies. Good-night, Miss Brunel; good-bye, *Miss Featherstone*."

With which he shook hands and departed—to spend the rest of the evening in walking recklessly along dark suburban roads, wondering whether a few drops of prussic acid would not be his gentlest and truest friend.

First love had been awakened in Frank Glyn's heart by the unlucky instrumentality of Miss Featherstone. Delighted with this new and beautiful idealism, he was eager to repay her with an extravagant gratitude for what, after all, was only his own gift to himself. Nelly knew nothing of this occult psychical problem; but was aware of the extravagant gratitude; and

conducted herself toward it and him with such results as do not concern this present history.

"You are very hard upon the poor boy," said Annie Brunel.

Nelly pouted prettily, as if she had been ten years younger than she was, and said he had no business to be so quick-tempered. But, after supper, when they were retiring for the night, and she had grown confidential, she confessed she was very fond of him and hoped he would come again and "make it up."

"I can't help quarrelling with him, and he can't help quarrelling with me; and so we'll go on, and on, and on—"

"Until you marry."

"No, until I marry somebody else, for the sake of peace and quiet. And yet I declare if he were to come boldly up to-morrow and insist on my marrying him, I'd do it at once. But he is always too sensitive, and respectful, and I can't help teasing him. Why doesn't he *make* me do what he wants. He's a man, and I'm a woman, and yet I never feel as if he were stronger than I was—as if I ought to look to him for strength, and advice, and what not. He's too much of a girl in his delicate frightened ways."

Next morning Nelly got a messenger and sent him up to Mr. John Hubbard's for Annie Brunel's boxes, which had been left packed up. Then they two went out to inspect some lodgings which had been recommended to them by Miss Featherstone's landlady. The house was a dingy building in Howland Street, Tottenham Court Road; but the rent of the two rooms was small, and Miss Brunel engaged them. She had very little money now in her purse. Mrs. Hubbard and she had been on so peculiar terms that both refrained from talking about salary; and when the boxes were brought down to Nelly's place by the messenger, no communication of any kind accompanied them.

"If they want to see me, Nelly," said Annie Brunel, "they will send to your house, thinking that my address. But I don't want my address to be given them, mind, on any consideration."

"But how are you to live, my dear?"

"I must find out, like other people," she said, with a smile.

"Won't your Anerley friends help you?"

"What help could I take from them? Besides, they are worse off than myself, and that pretty girl of theirs, about whom I have so often spoken to you, is very poorly and wants to be taken out of London. I should rather like to help them than think of their helping me."

"Won't you come back to the stage, then?"

"Not until I am starving."

The rehearsals for the new burlesque began, and a farce was put on in which Nelly played: so that, for several days, she was so busy from morning till night that she never had time to run up to see her friend in these poor Howland Street lodgings. So Annie Brunel was left alone. The Anerleys had not her address. The Hubbards she was only too anxious to avoid.

Mrs. Christmas, her old companion, was gone; and around her were thousands of her fellow-creatures all struggling to get that bit of bread and that glass of water which were necessary to her existence.

The landlady and her husband treated her with great respect, because, when asked for a month's rent in advance, she at once gave them the two sovereigns demanded. There remained to her, in available money, about twenty-four shillings, which is not a great sum wherewith to support a person looking out for a situation in London.

In about a week's time Nelly Featherstone called. After the usual osculation, and my dearing, Nelly assumed a serious air and said that it wouldn't do.

"You're looking remarkably ill, and you'll be worse if you sit moping here, and doing nothing. You must be a descendant of Don Quixote. Why not come down to the theatre, see Mr. Melton, and get an engagement?"

"I can't do it, Nelly."

"You mean you won't. Then, at all events, you'll spend to-day as a holiday. The rehearsals are all over. I shall send for Frank, and he will take us into the country."

"For shame! To drive that poor fellow mad, and then call him back whenever you want a service from him."

"It will give him far more delight than it will us."

"No, Nelly; I have no heart to go anywhere. If you have promised to meet your Frank, as I imagine, you ought to go off by yourself at once."

"I'm not going to do any thing of the kind. Tell me what you mean to do if you remain in the house."

"See if there are any more letters I can write, and watch the postman as he comes round from Tottenham Court Road."

"Then you can't go on doing that forever. Put on your bonnet, and let us have a walk down Regent Street, and then come and have dinner with me, and spend the afternoon with me, until I go to the theatre."

This she was ultimately persuaded to do. Nelly did her utmost to keep her friend in good spirits; and altogether the day was passed pleasantly enough.

But the reaction came when Nelly had to go down to the theatre alone.

"You look so very wretched and miserable," said she, to Annie. "I can't bear the idea of your going home to that dull room. And what nonsense it is not to have a fire because you can't afford it. Come you down to the theatre; Mr. Melton will give you a stage-box all to yourself; then you'll go home with me to-night, and stay with me."

She would not do that. She went home to the cold, dark room—she lit only one candle for economy's sake—and she asked if there were any letters. There were none. She had only a few shillings left now. She abhorred the idea of getting into debt with her landlady; but that,

or starvation, lay clearly before her. And as she sat and pondered over her future, she wondered whether her mother had ever been in the like straits, whether she too, had ever been alone, with scarcely a friend in the world. She thought of the Count, too.

"If the beggar would marry the king, and exchange her rags for silk attire," she said to herself, bitterly, "now would be the time."

By the nine o'clock post no letter came; but a few minutes after the postman had passed, the landlady came up to the door of her room.

"A letter, please, miss, left by a boy."

Hoping against hope, she opened it as soon as the man had left. Something tumbled out and fell on the floor. On the page before her she saw inscribed, in a large, coarse, masculine handwriting, these words:

"An old admirer begs the liberty to send the enclosed to Miss Brunel, with love and affection."

But in that assumed handwriting Nelly Featherstone's *e*'s and *r*'s were plainly legible. The recipient of the letter picked up the folded paper that had fallen. It was a five-pound note.

"Poor Nelly!" she said, with a sort of nervous smile, and then her head fell on her hands, which were on the table, and she burst into tears over the scrawled bit of paper.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

POSSESSION.

MR. JOSEPH CAYLEY, JUNR., sat in his private room in the office of Cayley and Hubbard. He was an unusually tall man, with a thin, cold, hard face, black eyes, black hair, and an expression of extraordinary solemnity. He looked as if none of his ancestors had ever laughed. A shrewd and clear-headed man of business, he was remarkable at once for his upright conduct of professional affairs and for the uncompromising frankness, with the extreme courtesy, of his personal demeanor. His friends used to wonder how such a man and John Hubbard ever pulled together; but they did, and their business was even better now than when old Mr. Cayley took John Hubbard into partnership.

A card was handed to Mr. Cayley by one of the youths in the office. He glanced at the card, looked at it attentively, and then there came over his face a singular expression of concern, surprise, and almost fear.

"Show her in," he said, sharply, to the lad.

He rose and paced up and down the room for a moment; then he found himself bowing into a chair a lady completely dressed in black, who had just entered.

"Will you permit me," he said, fixing his big black eyes upon her, "to ask my partner to join us? I anticipate the object of your visit—and—and—"

"Does your partner live at Haverstock Hill?"

"Yes."

"I would rather speak with you alone, then," said the young lady, calmly. "I have here a

letter from my mother, Mrs. Brunel, to you. I need not explain to you why the letter has not been delivered for years. I was not to deliver it until necessity—"

"You need not explain," said Mr. Cayley, hurriedly taking the letter. "This is addressed to my father; but I may open it? I know its contents; I know every thing you wish to know, Miss Brunel."

When he had opened the letter, he read it, and handed it to Annie Brunel, who read these words:

"Mr. Cayley, my daughter claims her rights.

"Annie, Marchioness of Knottingley."

She looked at him, vaguely, wonderingly, and then at the faded, brown writing again. The words seemed to disappear in a mist; then there was a soft sound in her ears, as of her mother's voice; and then a sort of languor stole over her, and it seemed to her that she was falling asleep.

"Take this glass of wine," was the next thing she heard. "You have been surprised, alarmed, perhaps. But you know the handwriting to be your mother's?"

"Yes," was the reply, in a low voice.

"And you understand now why you were to call upon us."

"I don't know—I don't understand—my mother ought to be here now," said the girl, in hurried, despairing accents. "If the letter means any thing, if my mother was a rich lady, why did she keep always to the stage? Why conceal it from me? And my father? Where was he that he allowed her to travel about and work day after day and night after night?"

"He was dead."

Many and many a time had Joseph Cayley rehearsed this scene upon which he had now entered. His earliest initiation into the secrets of the office was connected with it. It had been a legacy to him from his father; and the unusual mystery and importance of the case had so impressed him that he used to imagine all the circumstances of the young girl's coming to claim her own, and of his speeches and bearing during the interview. He forgot all his elaborate speeches, and remembering only the bare facts of the case, related them with as great delicacy as he could. Now for the first time did Annie Brunel understand the sad circumstances of her mother's story, and for the moment she lost sight of every thing else. She was away back in that strange and mournful past, recalling her mother's patient bearing, her heroic labor, her more than heroic cheerfulness and self-denial, and the bitter loneliness of her last hours.

"It was his friends who kept him from her?" she asked, not daring to look up.

The lawyer knew better; but he dared not tell the cruel truth to the girl.

"Doubtless," he said. "Your father's friends were very proud, and very much against his marrying an actress."

"And my mother feared my going among them?"

"Doubtless. But you need not do so now."

"Do they know who I am?"

"Yes, my lady."

He uttered the words, not out of compliment, but of set purpose. It was part of the information he had to give her. She looked up to him with a curious look, as if he were some magician who had suddenly given her sacksful of gold, and was about to change the gold again into flints.

"If all this is true, why did I never hear it from any one else?"

"We alone knew, and your father's friends. They concealed the marriage as well as they could, and certainly never would speak to any one about you."

"And all these estates you speak of are mine?" she said, with a bewildered look on her face.

"Yes."

"And all that money?"

"Certainly."

"Without the chance of any body coming forward and saying it is not mine?"

"There is no such chance that I know of, once you have been identified as Lady Knottingley's daughter, and that will not be difficult."

"And I can do with the money what I like?" she asked, the bewilderment turning to a look of joy.

"Most undoubtedly."

"Out of such sums as you mention, I could give £20,000 to one person, and the same amount to another?"

"Certainly. But you will forgive my saying that such bequests are not usual—perhaps you will get the advice of a friend."

"I have only two friends—a Miss Featherstone, and an old gentleman called Mr. Anerley. These are the two I mean."

Mr. Cayley opened his eyes with astonishment.

"Miss Featherstone of the — Theatre?"

"Yes."

"You propose to give her £20,000?"

"Yes," said the young girl, frankly, and with a bright happy look on her face.

"The imprudence—the indiscretion—if I may say so!—(although it is no business of mine, my lady, and we shall be glad to fulfill any of your instructions). What could such a girl do with that sum of money?"

"What shall I do with all the rest—if it is real, which I can scarcely believe yet? But I wish you to tell me truly what was my mother's intention in keeping this secret from me. I was only to apply to you in extreme need. No one knows how extreme my need is—how extreme it was last night when it drove me to take out that letter and resolve to appeal to you."

"Your mother told my father why she should keep the secret from you. She wished you never to undergo the wrongs she had suffered by coming in contact with those people whose influence over your father she feared and hated."

"And how she used to teach me always to

rely upon the stage!" she said, musingly, and scarcely addressing herself to the man before her. "Perhaps I have done very wrong in relinquishing it. Perhaps I am to have as miserable a life as she had; but it will not be through *them*."

"No, my lady, there is no necessity why you should ever see one of the family."

"And it was her wish that I should come to you when I was in extreme distress—"

"Distress! I hope not pecuniary—"

"That, and nothing else," said the girl, calmly.

Mr. Cayley was only too glad to become her banker, until the legal arrangements should permit of her stepping into a command of money such as Harry Ormond himself had never owned.

"And in the mean time," she added, "you will not mention to any one my having seen you. I do not know what I shall do yet. I fear there is something wrong about it all—something unreal or dangerous; and when I think of my poor mother's life, I do not wish to do any thing in haste. I can not believe that all this money is mine. And the title, too—I should feel as if I were on the stage again, and were assuming a part that I should have to drop in an hour. I don't want all that money; I should be afraid of it. If my mother were only here to tell me!"

Mr. Cayley was called away at this moment to see some other visitor. In his absence John Hubbard came to the door of the room and looked in.

He saw before him a figure which he instantly recognized. The girl was looking at the sheet of brown paper which bore her mother's name, her eyes were wet, and her hands were clasped together, as if in mute supplication to that scrap of writing to say something more and guide her in this great emergency. John Hubbard guessed the whole situation of affairs directly. Without a moment's hesitation, he entered, and Annie Brunel looked up.

"My poor girl," he said, in accents of deep compassion, with his pale face twitching nervously, "I understand your sad position; and if you had only remained in our house a few days longer, our counsel and advice might have been of service to you in this crisis. How deeply you must feel the want of a true and faithful adviser—"

John Hubbard became aware that he had made a mistake. All the return that his sympathetic consolation provoked was a calm and penetrating look; and then, with a sudden change of manner, that surprised and half frightened him, she rose to her feet, and said, coldly and proudly,

"I am here on business; it is Mr. Cayley I wish to see."

Bewildered alike by her manner and her speech, Mr. Hubbard only blundered the worse.

"My lady," he said, hurriedly, and with profound respect, "you will forgive me if I have

been too forgetful in offering you my sympathy. But as an old friend—our old relations—the pleasant evenings—"

"Mr. Hubbard," she said in the same tone (and before the clear, cold, cruel notes of her voice the walls of his imaginative Jericho fell down and crumbled into dust), "I am much obliged to you and your wife for having employed me. I hope I did my work in return for the food I received. As to your kindness, and the pleasant evenings spent in your house, I have an impression which I need not put into words. You know I had a conversation with your brother before I left your house which seemed to explain your kindness to me. At the same time, I am as grateful to you as I can be."

"That brother of mine again!" thought John Hubbard, with an inward groan.

Mr. Cayley came into the room, and was surprised to find his partner there.

"I wish to speak to you in private, sir," said Miss Brunel to Mr. Cayley; and thus dismissed, John Hubbard retired, thinking of the poor children who had been deprived of handsome little presents all through the blundering folly of their uncle.

"Hang him!" said John Hubbard; "the best thing the fool can do is to shoot himself and leave his money to the boys. As for *her*, he has set her dead against me forever. And now she will be Lady Annie Knottingley, and my wife might have been her best friend, and we might have lived, almost, at that splendid place in Berks—and the children—"

There was no more miserable creature in London that day than the Count's brother; and he considered himself an injured, ill-used, and virtuous man.

The appearance of John Hubbard had done this one good thing—it had determined Annie Brunel to make up her mind. It recalled so forcibly the loneliness and misery, the humiliation and wretchedness of these past months, that she instantly resolved never, if she could help it, to come into contact with such people again. With this wealth at her command, she was free. She could choose such friends, and scenes, and pursuits as she liked best; she could—and here the warm heart of her leaped up with joy—she could reach out her hand to those friends who might be in want—she could be their secret protector, and glide in like an invisible fairy to scare away the wolf from their door by the sunshine of her gilded and luminous presence. This splendid potentiality she hugged to her heart with a great joy; and as she went away from Mr. Cayley's office (after a long interview, in which he explained to her the legal aspects and requirements of the situation) there was a fine, happy light on her face. She no longer doubted that it was all real. She already felt the tingling of a full hand; and her brain was busy with pictures of all the people to whom that hand was to be freely extended. In many a romance had she played; but never a romance like this, in which all the world but herself was ignorant of

the secret. She would go about like an emper- or with a bundle of pardons in his pocket, like a kindly spirit who would transform the coals in poor men's grates into lumps of gleaming rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds. She would conceal her mysterious power; and lo! the invisible will would go forth, and this or that unhappy man or woman—ready to sink in despair before the crushing powers of circumstance—would suddenly receive her kindly help, and find himself or herself enriched and made comfortable by an unknown agency.

Like every one who has suffered the trials of poverty, she fancied that nearly all the ills of life were attributable to want of money, and she saw in this wealth which had become hers a magnificent instrument of amelioration. She had a very confused notion of Mr. Cayley's figures. She knew the value of five pounds or twenty, or even a hundred; but when it came to thousands comprehension failed her. She could not tell the difference between a hundred and fifty thousand pounds and the same sum per annum; both quantities were not reducible to the imagination, and consequently conveyed no distinct impression. She knew vaguely that the money at her command was inexhaustible; she could give each of her friends—certainly she had not many—a fortune without affecting (sensibly to herself) this accumulation of banker's ciphers.

So she walked westward through the crowded city, weaving dreams. Habit had so taught her to dread the expense of a cab that she never thought of employing a conveyance, although she had in her pocket fifty pounds which Mr. Cayley had pressed upon her. She was unaware of the people, the noise, the cold January wind, and the dust. Her heart was sick with the delight of these vague imaginings, and the inexpressible joy of her anticipations was proof against those physical inconveniences which, indeed, she never perceived.

Yet her joy was troubled. For among all the figures that her heart loved to dwell upon—all the persons whom she pictured as receiving her munificent and secret kindness—there was one with whom she knew not how to deal. What should she give to Will Anerley? The whole love of her heart he already possessed; could she, even though he were to know nothing of the donor, offer him money? She shrank from such a suggestion with apprehensive dislike and repugnance; but yet, her love for him seemed to ask for something, and that something was not money.

"What can I do better than make him marry Dove, and forget me?" she said to herself, and she was aware of a pang at her heart which all Harry Ormond's money, and twenty times that, could not have removed.

For a little while the light died away from her face; but by-and-by the old cheerful resolute spirit returned, and she continued her brisk walk through the gray and busy streets.

"Mr. Cayley," she said to herself, talking over her projects as a child prattles to its new toys,

"fancies Mr. Anerley had thirty or forty thousand pounds. If I send him that, they will all go down to Kent again, and Dove will win her lover back to her with the old associations. They might well marry then, if Will were not as fiercely independent as if he were a Spanish duke. I could not send *him* money; if he were to discover it, I should die of shame. But it might be sent to him indirectly as a professional engagement; and then—then they would marry, I know—and perhaps they might even ask me to the wedding. And I should like to go, to see Dove dressed as a bride, and the look on her face!"

Dove did not know at that moment what beautiful and generous spirit was scheming with a woman's wit to secure her welfare—what tender projects were blossoming up, like the white flowers of charity and love, in the midst of the dull and selfish London streets. But when Annie Brunel, having walked still farther westward, entered the house which the Anerleys occupied, and when she came into the room, Dove thought she had never seen the beautiful dark face look so like the face of an angel.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ORMOND PLACE.

A STILL, cold, beautiful morning in March—the dark crimson sun slowly creeping up behind the tall and leafless trees of the wood on this Berkshire hill. There is snow everywhere—snow on the far uplands, snow on this sloping forest, snow on the shelving ground that glides down to the banks of the smooth, blue waters of the Thames. There is a ruddy glow over that wintry waste of white; for the eastern vapors deaden the light of the sun, and redden it, and steep the far horizon in a soft purple haze. There is not a breath of wind. The sere and withered stems of the tall gray rushes by the river-side are motionless except when the wild duck stir in their marshy secrecy, or the water-hens swim out to take a cautious look up and down the stream. Here and there too the river catches a streak of crimson and purple as it lies hushed and still in the hushed, still, white meadows.

Back from these meadows lies the long low hill which slopes downward to the east, and loses itself in illimitable woods. Up here on its summit is the little village of Steyne—only a church, with a square gray tower, a vicarage smothered in dark ivy, and two or three cottages. Farther along the great bank you come to the woods of Ormond Place; and right in the centre of them, in a great clearance visible for miles round, stands, fronting the river and the broad valley and the far landscape, the house in which Harry Ormond, Marquis of Knottingley, died.

It is a modern house, large, roomy, and stately, with oval-roofed green-houses breaking the sharp descent of the wall to the ground; a

house so tall and well-placed as to overlook the great elms in the park which, on the other side of the broad and banked-up lawn, slopes down into the valley. As the red sun rises over the purple fog it catches the pale front of the house, and sheds over it a glimmer of gold. The snow gleams cold and yellow on the evergreens, on the iron railings of the park, on the lawn where it is crossed and recrossed with a network of rabbits' footprints. Finally, as the sun masters the eastern vapors, and strikes with a wintry radiance on the crimson curtains inside the large windows (and they have on this morning a warmer light flickering upon them from within), Ormond Place, all white and gold, shines like a palace of dreams, raised high and clear over that spacious English landscape that lies cold and beautiful along the noblest of English rivers.

There was life and stir in Ormond Place this morning. The carriage-drive had been swept; the principal rooms in the house stripped of their chintz coverings; great fires lit; the children of the lodge dressed in their smartest pinafores; the servants in new liveries; harness, horses, carriages, and stables alike polished to the last degree. The big fires shone in the grates, and threw lengthening splashes of soft crimson on the thick carpets and up the palely-decorated walls. The sleeping palace had awoken, and the new rush of life tingled in its veins.

About twelve o'clock in the forenoon the carriage that had been sent to Corchester station returned with two occupants inside. The children at the lodge, drawn up in line, bobbed a courtesy as they stared wonderingly at the carriage window, where they saw nothing. A few minutes afterward Annie Brunel, pale a little, and dressed entirely and simply in black, walked into her father's house between the servants, who were unconsciously trying to learn their future fate in the expression of her face. And if they did not read in that face a calm forbearance, a certain sad sympathy and patience, they had less penetration than servants generally have.

She entered one of the rooms—a great place with panelled pillars in the centre, and a vague vision of crystal and green leaves at the farther end—and sat down in one of the chairs near the blazing fire. It was not a moment of triumph—it was a moment of profound, unutterable sadness. The greatness of the place, the strange faces around her, increased the weight of loneliness she felt. And then all the reminiscences of her mother's life were present to her, and she seemed to have established a new and strange link between herself and her. It seemed as if the great chasm of time and circumstance had been bridged over, and that in discovering her mother's house and the old associations of these bygone years, she should have discovered her also, and met the kindly face she once knew. If Annie Napier had walked into the room just then and laid her hand on her daughter's shoulder, I do not think the girl would have been surprised.

"Was my mother ever in this house?" she asked of Mr. Cayley, not noticing that he was still standing with his hat in his hand.

"Doubtless. She was married in that little church we passed."

"And instead of spending her life here in comfort and quiet, he let her go away to America, and work hard and bitterly for herself and me."

Mr. Cayley said nothing.

"Do you know any thing of her life here? How long she staid? What were her favorite rooms? Where she used to sit?"

"No, your ladyship; I only presume Lady Knottingley must have lived here for a little while before going to Switzerland. My father might be able to tell me."

"I am very anxious to see him—he is the only person I am anxious to see. He knew my mother; perhaps he can tell me something about her life here and in Switzerland. She *may* have left some things in the house—a book or a picture—that he might tell me was hers—don't you think so?"

Mr. Cayley, against his knowledge, was forced to admit that it *was* possible, for he saw there were tears in the girl's eyes.

"Would you care to go through the house now?" he suggested. Mrs. Tillotson will go with you, and see what arrangements or alterations you want made. And about your future residence here—"

"I can not stay here," she said; "the place is too big and too lonely. I could not bear to live alone in this great place."

"Your ladyship need not want for society. Both of the trustees, Lord Sefton and—"

"I will not see one of them!" she said, with flashing eyes. "I consented to see them, when you said it was necessary—but to meet them as friends! They knew my mother; they must have seen her and known her; and they never tried to help her. They were men; and they let a woman be treated like that!"

The bitter scorn of the words sounded so strangely as it came from the gentle face; but there was an indignant flush in her cheeks, and indignation in her eyes.

"My mother spent years of weary labor that she might never go among these people. With all her love for me, she thought it better that I, too, should work for my living, and run the chances of illness, rather than go among them; and am I to make friends with them now? Their condescension is great; but when a woman has lived the life that I have, she begins to mistrust people who want to be friends with you only when you become fortunate. And why do they want to be friends with me? They will take me into society? I don't wish to go. They will offer me their wives and sisters as companions. I prefer other companions. I would rather walk out of this house a beggar to-morrow morning than pretend to be friends with people whom I hate."

"Your ladyship is unjust," said Mr. Cayley.

"These gentlemen tried to induce your mother to return to England and accept that effort at compensation which Lord Knottingley made when it was too late. Nor could they show any interest in your welfare before now without revealing that secret which your mother had imposed on us all. As well blame me for not seeking you out before you came to our office. We all of us knew who you were; we were bound to let you make the first overtures yourself."

"Compensation? You imagine that a woman who had her heart broken should have accepted that tardy acknowledgment of her rights as a sufficient compensation?"

"It was all Lord Knottingley could then offer," said the lawyer, who stuck manfully to the clear outlines of the case as they lay mapped out in his brain without regard to the distortion produced by the generous impulses of love, and pity, and indignation. These disturbant influences, in the present case, he could not well understand; for he failed to comprehend the powerful caste-hatred which the girl had sucked in with her mother's milk—a bitter and illogical prejudice, which neither the tenderness of her own nature, nor the provoked arguments of Will, nor the wise counsel and example of Mr. Anerley had in any way tempered.

Shortly afterward, they went on a tour of inspection through the house, accompanied by Mrs. Tillotson, a tall, thin-faced, dark woman, with placid, melancholy eyes, and a soft voice. The first question asked of the housekeeper by her new mistress was whether she remembered Lord Knottingley's wife. But neither Mrs. Tillotson, nor any one of the servants, had been with Lord Knottingley at that time.

"Except Brooks, my lady, perhaps. He has been with the family since he was a boy."

"Who is Brooks?"

"The lodge-keeper. Perhaps your ladyship didn't see him at the gate, for he is old, and seldom moves out of doors. But surely on such a day as this—"

"I saw some children—"

"They are his grandchildren—John Brooks's children. They all live in the lodge. But he is sure to present himself during the day; and I hope your ladyship won't be offended by his manner—his bluntness of speaking—"

When they had gone through the house, and the young girl had indicated what rooms she should occupy, they returned down-stairs. There was an old man in the hall, his cap in his hand, his long white hair falling on the neck of his fine Sunday coat, which was considerably too small for him. He regarded Annie Brunel with a curious look, and said to her as she approached:

"Pardon, my lady, I thought I'd come up and see as it were all true. And true it is—true it is."

"That is Brooks," said Mrs. Tillotson.

The girl bade the old man go into the great drawing-room.

"You don't remember me," he said. "I re-

member you; but as you came down them stairs, I'd 'a sworn it wasn't you. If they hadn't told me you were coming, I should ha' said it was a ghost—the ghost o' your mother as come down them stairs."

"You remember her?" she said, with an eager, bright look.

"Ay, and you too. You don't remember me; but I nearly killed you once—when your pony tried to take the upper 'and on ye, and I 'it 'im, and afoor I knew where I was—"

"But where did all this happen?"

"Why, in Switzerland, where you and your mother was. I've got good eyes; I can remember. And there's lots more o' the old folk as might, only they've turned 'em all off, and brought in new uns, as doesn't know nothin' o' the family, or the Place. It was your father as said I should live here till I died, and then they can turn me out, if they like; and I came up to see if it was true you had come home, and whether you'd want me to go with the rest. If you mean it, say it, plump and plain. I'm not afeard to go; I can earn my living as well as younger men I knows on about this 'ere very place—"

"My good man, don't disquiet yourself. You will never have to leave your house through me. But I want you to tell me all you know about my mother—every thing. Won't you sit down? And you will have some wine."

Mr. Cayley rang for some wine; and Annie Brunel herself poured some into a glass and gave it to the old man.

"I like the wine—and it's not the first time by forty year as I've tasted his lordship's wine—but I can't abide them big, blazing fires as melts a man's marrow."

"Come outside, then," said the girl; "the day is pleasant enough out of doors."

"Ah, that's better," he said, and his keen, fresh face brightened up as he stepped outside into the brisk cold air, with the brilliant sunshine lying on the crisp snow.

The two of them walked up and down the long carriage-drive, between the tall rows of bleak trees; and as the old man garrulously gossiped about the past times and his more or less confused memories, it seemed to Annie Brunel as though the whole scene around her were unreal. The narrowing avenue of trees, the heaped-up snow, the broad shafts of sunlight falling across the path, the glimpses of the white meadows, and the blue stream, and the wintry sunshine hitting on the vane of the village church, were all so very like a theatrical "set;" while the man beside her, whom she had never seen before, seemed to be some strange link connecting her with a forgotten and inscrutable past. The assurance that he would not be "turned off to follow the rest" had softened old Brooks's usually querulous and pugnacious manner; and in his most genial fashion he recalled and recounted whatever stories he could remember of Annie Brunel's old childhood, and of her mother's happy life on the margin of that Swiss lake. He actually gossiped his companion into cheer-

fulness. Forgetting all about Mr. Cayley, she went with Brooks down to the lodge; and there the old man, intensely proud of the familiarity he had already established between himself and her, presented to her, with calm airs of superiority, his overawed son and daughter-in-law. And the new mistress made herself quite at home; and had two of the children on her knee at once; and was interested in Tom's pet black-bird; and expressed her admiration of Jack's string of blown eggs; and finally invited all the young ones to tea, in the housekeeper's room, that evening at six punctually. Another visitor was expected that evening. Much as Annie Brunel desired to play the part of a secret and invisible benefactor to all her friends, she found that this would cut off from her any chance of companionship; and so, before going down into Berks, she had told she story of her altered fortunes to Nelly Featherstone, and begged of that young person to come down and stay with her for a time. Nelly burst into tears of joy; was profoundly conscious of the benefit of having so desirably rich a friend; was honestly delighted and prudently speculative at the same moment, and accepted the invitation.

Nelly was a girl of spirit. She knew she would be inspected by critical servants, and perhaps by visitors of exalted rank, and she resolved not to shame her old friend. She accurately sketched beforehand the character she would assume; fixed her demeanor; decided the tone she would adopt in speaking to Lady Annie Knottingley; and, finally, bought the current number of *Punch*, and dressed her hair and herself in imitation of one of the ladies of that periodical.

The carriage was sent to meet her at Corchesster in the evening. The calm dignity with which she treated the servants was admirable. Nor was her dress less admirable, so far as a faithful copy of the *Punch* lady was concerned, except in point of color. Unfortunately she had no guide to color, except her own rather whimsical taste; and as several parts of her attire belonged to her dramatic wardrobe, she looked like a well-dressed lady seen through a prism.

When she entered the house, confronted the servants, was introduced to Mr. Cayley, and quietly went up to kiss Annie Brunel, her manner was excellent. A woman who makes a living by studying the ridiculous and imitating it, can lay it aside when she chooses. Nor was her assumption of womanly dignity and reserve less a matter of ease. Nelly Featherstone was clever enough to conceal herself from the eyes of a critical London audience; surely she was able to impose on a lot of country servants and a lawyer inexperienced in theatrical affairs.

When she came into the drawing-room before dinner, her make-up was magnificent. She was a little too gorgeous, certainly; but in these days considerable latitude is allowed in color and shape. Miss Brunel was alone.

"Why, Nelly," she said, "what was the use

of your troubling to make yourself so fine? I must have put you to so much expense."

"Well, you have," said the other. "But it isn't every day I dine at a grand house."

"And you mustn't talk to me as if I were a duchess merely because Mr. Cayley is present. I have asked him to dine with us. You must speak to me as you are speaking now."

"Oh, no, my dear, it would never do," said the practical Nelly, with a wise shake of the head. "If you don't remember who you are, I must. You are a fine lady; I am an actress. If you ask me to visit you, it is because you wish me to amuse you. But when I'm not amusing you I must be respectful. Mr. Cayley knows who I am; the servants don't. I can be grand to them; but with him—"

"My absurd girl, why won't you be yourself? You don't need to care for Mr. Cayley, or the servants, or any one else. Mr. Cayley knows I was an actress; if the servants don't, they will very soon. And you are here merely as my friend; and I am deeply indebted to you for coming; and if Mr. Melton will only refrain from changing the pieces for weeks to come, we shall have a pleasant romp together down here. By the way, did you hear some absurd noises a few minutes ago?"

"I did."

"That was my first token of popularity. I had the lodge-keeper's children up here to tea; and as they all got a lump of cake when they went away, they collected round the door outside and cheered. I think they call that intimidation and bribery—buying the popular vote, or something of the kind."

During dinner an obvious battle was being waged between Nelly and the butler. But the official and cumbrous dignity of the one was no match for the splendid and haughty languor of Nelly's eyes and the indolent indifference of her manner and tone. Somehow the notice of the servants was chiefly drawn to Miss Featherstone; but she decidedly managed to conquer them, and that in a style which puzzled and amused her friend at the head of the table. Nor would Nelly permit the least familiarity of approach on the part of her hostess. And as it would have been preposterous to have chatted confidentially with a person who returned these advances with a marked deference and respect, "my lady" fell into her friend's whim, and the conversation at dinner was consequently somewhat peculiar.

When the two women were left alone, however, Annie Brunel strongly remonstrated. But Nelly was firm.

"If you don't know who you are, I do."

Drawing two low easy-chairs in toward the fire, they sat down and entered into mutual confidences. The one had much to tell—the other much to suggest; and never had two children more delight in planning what they would do if they were emperors than had these two girls in concocting plots for the benefit of all the persons they knew, and a great many more.

Miss Brunel took a note from her pocket and gave it to her companion to read.

"In strict confidence," she added.

These were the words Nelly saw—"A friend who has urgent reasons for remaining unknown has placed to the credit of Mr. Hubert Anerley, at the London and Westminster Bank, the sum of £30,000. Mr. Anerley is asked to accept this money as a free and frankly offered gift, to be used on behalf of himself and his family. A bank-note of £100 is inclosed, to satisfy Mr. Anerley that this communication is made in good faith."

"Thirty thousand pounds!" said Nelly, in an awed whisper. "I have often thought of some one sending me a lot of money—thousands, millions of money—but I think if any one were actually to send me a hundred pounds I should die of surprise first and joy afterward."

"The money has already been placed to his account at the bank; and this note will be sent to him to-morrow when Mr. Cayley returns to town. How I should like to send old White the prompter a hundred pounds—the poor old man who has that dreadful wife."

"Don't do any thing of the kind, my dear," said Nelly, sagely. "He would starve his wife worse than ever, because he wouldn't earn a penny until he had drunk every farthing of the money you sent him."

"Perhaps you will forbid my giving you any thing?"

"Certainly not. I should be glad of a cup of tea or coffee."

"Which?"

"I like coffee best, but I prefer tea," said Nelly, with grave impartiality.

Tea and coffee having been procured, they continued their talk.

"You went to my lodgings?"

"Yes."

"And secured them for an indefinite time?"

"Yes."

"And all my clothes and things are as I left them?"

"Yes—that is, as far as I could look over them. Mr. Glyn was with me."

"Oh, he has forgiven you again!"

"Certainly not," said Nelly, with a touch of indignation. "He has not forgiven me, for I never provoked a quarrel with him in my life. He has come to his senses, that is all; and he is no sooner come to them than he is off again. But this is the final blow; he will never get over this."

"This what?"

"My disappearance from London without telling him. I go back. He comes to see me; is surprised, offended; wants me to be penitent for having annoyed him by my silence. Of course I am not. Then he becomes angry, demands to know where I have been; I tell him that is my business, and he goes off in a fury. That's nothing new. But then he sends me a formal note, saying that unless I write to him and explain my absence from London he will never see me again."

"Which you will do."

"How could I without telling him about you."

"Say you went to visit a friend."

"Then he says, 'What friend?' with a face as black as thunder. I reply that I won't be subjected to his suspicions. He retorts that he is not suspicious; but that common sense, and what not, and what not. I tell him that he dare not talk to a lady of his own class in the way he talks to me; and that it is because I am an actress that he is suspicious, taking up the vulgar prejudices against actresses. Now, all the time I have known him, I don't think we ever passed a day without having a quarrel about the profession."

"Your acquaintanceship must have been agreeable."

"It has. There is nothing both of us like so much as quarrelling and making up. For my part, I couldn't bear to have a sweetheart always pleasant, and reasonable, and sensible. I like one who is madly in love, who does extravagant things, who quarrels fearfully, and gets frantic with delight when you let him be friends again."

"But the very last time we spoke of Mr. Glyn you said he and you would never get on together because he wanted those very virtues of solidity, and common sense, and manly forbearance. You said he was too like yourself."

"Did I say so? Well, I have a different explanation of it every day. I only know that we perpetually quarrel, and that the making up of quarrels is very nice."

"What would you do if I were to give you £500 a year?"

"Go to Paris, and drive in the Bois de Boulogne with a pair of ponies," replied Nelly, with admirable precision.

"Wouldn't you marry Mr. Glyn, leave the stage, and be comfortable in some small house at Hampstead?"

"No," she said, frankly. "I haven't got the domestic faculty. I should worry his life out in a few months."

"What do you say, then, to going with me to America? I mean to leave England for a long time—for some years—and I shall spend most of the time in America, visiting the places my mother and I used to know."

"You are going to leave England?" said Nelly, looking up with earnest, curious eyes.

"Yes."

"You will forgive my saying it—you have had some peculiar secret from me for a long time—not your coming here, but something quite different. I knew that when you suddenly left the stage, and wouldn't return, for no reason whatever. Why should you have left the stage, of all people?"

"I left it simply because I got to dislike it—to hate it."

Nelly Featherstone said nothing, but she was evidently not satisfied with the answer. She remained unusually thoughtful for some time.

"And now you are going to America," she said. "Is there no other reason besides your wish to visit those places you speak of?"

"There is, but it is of no consequence to any one."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"THE COULIN."

THE snow that shone and gleamed in the sunlight along the Berkshire hills lay thick in the London squares, and was trampled brown and dry in the London streets; and yet even in the City it was white enough to throw a light upon the faces of the passers-by until commonplace countenances underwent a sort of transfiguration; and there was in the atmosphere a pearly radiance that brightened the fronts of the gray houses and glimmered into small and dingy rooms.

"Let all the light come in," said Dove, lying in bed, with a strange transparent color in her cheeks, and a wan lustre in her beautiful violet eyes; and when they let the strong light in, it fell on her face, and painted away the shadows under the eyebrows until the head that lay on the soft pillow acquired a strange, ethereal glory—a vision colored with sunlight.

"You haven't played the 'Coulin' for me for a long time now, Dove," said Mr. Anerley.

"You used never to like my playing the 'Coulin'; why do you want me to play it now?"

"I wish you were well enough to play any thing, my darling."

The girl stretched out her tiny, pale hand toward him.

"How you have petted me lately! If I were to get up just now and sing you the song I used to sing you, you wouldn't laugh at my 'meghily' any more, would you?"

"*Meghily, meghily shall I sleep now*"—the words sounded in his ears as the refrain of some spirit-song, heard long ago, in happy times, down in the far-off legendary Kentish Eden, where they had once lived.

"A letter for you, papa," said Mrs. Anerley, entering the room.

"I don't want it," he said, petulantly and angrily turning away—quarrelling with the mist of bitter tears that rose around his eyes.

She glanced from him to Dove (her kindly eyes brightened as they met the quick look of the girl), laid the letter down, and left the room again. Mechanically he took up the letter, opened it, and read it. Before he had finished, however, he seemed to recall himself; and then he read it again from the beginning, carefully, anxiously, with strange surprise on his face. He looked at the envelope, again at the letter, and finally at the bank-note which he held in his hand.

"Dove, Dove!" he said, "look at this! Here is the money that is to take us all down to St. Mary-Kirby again—back to the old house, you

know, and your own room up-stairs, and in a little while the spring-time will be in, and you and I shall go down to the river for primroses as we used to do. Here it is, Dove—every thing we want; and we can go whenever you brighten up and get strong enough to move."

"But where did you get the money, papa?"

"God must have looked at your face, my darling, and seen that you wanted to go to St. Mary-Kirby."

"And you have plenty of money, papa, to spend on any thing?"

All his ordinary prudence forsook him. Even without that guaranty of the bank-note, he would at once have believed in the genuineness of the letter, so eager was he to believe it for Dove's dear sake.

"Plenty of money, Dove? Yes. But not to spend on any thing. Only to spend on you."

"There was Will's knock," she said; "he has just come in time to hear the news. But go and tell him in another room, papa, for I am tired."

So he left the room, and, as Will had come in, the two men had a long consultation over this strange letter.

"You need not remain long in suspense, sir," said Will; "write me out a cheque for fifty pounds and I will take it down to the bank."

"But I have none of the printed cheques of the bank."

"You don't need one. That is a vulgar error. Any bit of paper, with a stamp on it, will do."

"But they must know that my signature is genuine."

"True. You must come down with me and see the manager. In any case, we can bear the disappointment, if the thing is a hoax. When you have ascertained that you are a rich man, father, I'll give you another piece of good news."

Mrs. Anerley was left with Dove, and the two men drove off to the bank. The manager had expected the visit. He ward off Will's bold inquiries with a grave silence; he had received certain instructions—it was not his business to say from whom.

"Before I can avail myself of this money," said Mr. Anerley, "you must at least answer me one question. Was it placed in your hands by Frederick Hubbard—by Count Schönstein?"

"No."

"Thank you."

So they went out into the free air, and lo! London was changed. It was no longer a cruel and bitter mother, starving her children, heedless of their cries and their sufferings, but a gracious empress, profuse of feasts, with stores of pleasures in her capacious lap. And this generous creature was to exercise all her power on behalf of Dove; and pure air, and the sweet sunlight, and the sharp hunger of health were once more to make the young girl's face less shadowy and unreal.

"Now for your news, Will," said the old man, cheerfully.

"Nothing much, sir," said he. "Only that I have gained the appointment, and the company guarantees me £1000 a year for three years. It never rains but it pours, you see; and if Heaven would only send one more good—"

"My poor girl's health," said the old man; and he would have given up all his money, and been glad to suffer far greater privations than he had done for the rest of his life, only to secure that one supreme blessing.

When they returned to the house, Mrs. Anerley came to say that Dove wanted to see Will, alone. He went into the room, and stooped over her, and kissed her forehead, and took her hand. She looked very pleased and happy.

"Papa won't be vexed any more. He has got plenty of money, has he not?" she said.

"Yes; but that money is for them. Our money, Dove, must come from me; and I have got it—I have got the appointment—and so hurry, hurry fast and get well, and then hey! for a carriage, and cream-white horses, and jingling bells to take my Dove to church."

She pressed his hand slightly; and her eyes were wistful and absent. The beautiful land lay along the horizon, and she strained her vision to see it, and the sight of it, for it was so beautiful, made her sad.

"Come close down, Will, and let me whisper to you. I have taken a fancy into my head lately. I never spoke of it, for I knew neither you nor papa had money; but now it is different. You said we were to be married."

"Why talk of our 'maghiage' in that melancholy way, you provoking mouse!"

"Don't laugh at me, Will! What I have been thinking is this; that I should like to know that I could be married to you at any time without having to wait until I was better—which might be for such a long, long time; and I should like to know that at any moment I could say to you, 'Will, make me your wife now,' and you could come into the room, and all the people would know that I was your wife."

There are ghastly dreams in which the sleeper, gazing on a broad and sunny landscape, suddenly becomes conscious of a cold and terrible pressure, and lifting up his eyes sees a broad cloth, white and black like a funeral pall, descending slowly from the sky, and shutting out the glad sunlight, and gliding down upon the earth. All living things fly from it; if they remain, they grow fixed and immovable, and their eyes become glazed as the eyes of death.

As terrible as such a dream was the vague, scarcely-to-be-imagined suggestion which these patient, simple words of Dove bore with them; and Will, horror-stricken by the picture on which her absent eyes seemed now to be gazing (with its dreadful hint about the people standing around), demanded why she should ask this thing, or why she troubled her mind with it.

"My dearest," she said, with a faint smile stealing across the childlike face, "it does not vex me. It pleases me. There is nothing dreadful about the idea to you, is there? I can not

go with you to church to be married. When you talk of a carriage, and white horses, and bells, it seems to me to be so far off—so very, very far away—that it is of no use, and it makes me miserable. But now, if we were married here, how I should like to hear you call me your wife, as you went about the room."

"And so you shall, my pet, whenever you please. But for you to turn such a dreadful heretic, Dove, and imagine that a marriage outside a church is a marriage at all! Why, even a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury seems sacrilegious where there are no bridecake, and old slippers, and a lot of carriages."

"Now you're becoming kind again, Will. And you'll do as I ask without bothering me about reasons? What I should like, you know, would be the power of getting married when I wanted—if I could have the dispensation, as you say, all ready, and just at any moment I might terrify you by crying out, 'Will, come and marry me!' I might be merciful, too, you know, Will; and perhaps let you off, if you were very good and attentive. I'd tell you some day to go to the drawer and take out the paper and burn it. It would be like giving a slave his freedom."

"You will be such a dreadful tyrant when you're married, Dove, that I shudder to think of what you'll do to me."

"I think I should have been very kind to you, Will," said the girl, suddenly bursting into tears, and turning away her face from him.

Next morning Dove was a great deal better, every body thought. Even the doctor spoke cheerfully, and the whole house was radiant. A thaw had set in; the air was foggy, and damp, and close, and the streets were in that condition which melted snow and drizzling rain generally produce in London; but inside the house there was sunlight enough for all concerned. And when, on the following morning, the weather cleared, and the sun painted bars of yellow on the curtains of the windows, it seemed as if the old, sad, anxious time were passed, and the dawn of a new and happy life had broken over them.

Nevertheless, Dove did not give up her idea of the special license and the private marriage. Rather she lay and brooded over it; and sometimes her face was moved with a happy delight which those around her could not well understand. Indeed, her heart was so bent upon it, that they all agreed to acquiesce in her wishes, and the necessary steps were taken to secure the legalization of the ceremony. The covert opposition which the proposal had met was surely not due to any opposition to the marriage, on the part of any one concerned, but to another and vaguer feeling which no one of them dared reveal to the other.

Said Dove to him suddenly this morning:

"Is Miss Brunel in town, Will?"

"I don't know, Dove."

"It is such a long time since she came to see me. I wonder if it was because you treated her so coldly the last time she was here."

"I?"

"You did not speak to her as you ought to have done. You kept near me, and kept speaking to me, as if you imagined I was afraid she would take you away from me again. I know you did it to please me; but I could see something in her face, Will, that seemed to say that I needn't be afraid, and that she wouldn't come again. I should be sorry for that. Will you go and ask her to come again?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"And you will speak to her just as you speak to me. I can't be jealous, Will—of her; because she did not try to take you from me."

"I will go if you like, Dove," said Will, "but considering—"

"I have considered," with petulant haste. "I have nothing to do all day, but lie and consider—and how many things I have considered within this day or two! I have altered my mind completely about the marriage. I won't have you marry me, Will—"

"But all the forms have been gone through."

She lay silent and meditative for some time, and then she said,

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble; but I should like to alter all my plans. You know the betrothals they have in French stories and in the operas—I should like to have a betrothal, Will, and all you will have to get for me is a big sheet of paper and a marriage-ring."

How eagerly he accepted the offer! This pretty notion of hers, which was obviously only meant to please a passing whim, was so much more grateful to him than the marriage proposal, with its black background.

"We will have it at once, Dove; and I think you are so well that you might drink a little champagne with us to grace the ceremony. Then I shall be able to call you my wife all the same; and you shall wear the wedding-ring; and then, you know, we can have the white horses and the carriages afterward. But I am afraid the betrothal contract will be frightfully inaccurate; I don't know the terms—"

"Get a sheet of paper, Will, and I will tell you what to write down."

He got the paper, and, at her dictation, wrote down the following words:

"We two, loving each other very dearly, write our names underneath in token that we have become husband and wife, and as a pledge of our constant love."

She smiled faintly when he placed the writing before her, and then she leaned back on the pillow, with a satisfied air. Mrs. Anerley now came into the room, and Will, obeying some further commands, went off to see whether Annie Brunel was yet in her old lodgings, and also to purchase a wedding-ring for the ceremony on which Dove had set her heart.

Miss Brunel's landlady told Will that her lady lodger would probably return the next day, with which piece of information he returned. He also showed Dove the wedding-

ring; and she placed it on her finger and kept it there.

But that evening the insidious disease from which the girl was suffering, withdrew the treacherous semblance of health it had lent to her burning cheeks, and it was obvious that she had grown rapidly worse. They all saw it, and would not confess it to each other. They only noticed that Mrs. Anerley did not stir now from Dove's bedside.

Mr. Anerley spent nearly the whole of that night in walking up and down his own room; from time to time stealthily receiving messages, for they would not admit to Dove that they felt much anxiety about her. The man seemed to have grown grayer; or perhaps it was the utter wretchedness of his face that made him look so old and careworn. Will sat in an easy-chair, gloomily staring into the fire. The appointment he had so eagerly sought and so joyfully gained, fancying it was to bring them all back again into pleasant circumstances, was only a bitter mockery now. He could not bear to think of it. He could bear to think of nothing when this terrible issue was at stake in the next room.

In the morning, when the first gray light was sufficiently clear to show Dove's face to the nurse and Mrs. Anerley, the latter looked at the girl for a long time.

"Why do you look at me so, mamma?" she asked.

She could not answer. She went into the next room, and, crying, "Oh, Hubert, Hubert, go and look at my Dove's face," burst into tears on her husband's bosom. And yet there was nothing remarkable about the girl's face—except, perhaps, to one who had watched it critically all the night through, and was alarmed by the transition from the ruddy lamplight to the gray and haggard tone of the morning.

The doctor came, and went away again, saying nothing.

Toward the forenoon Dove said to Will,

"I want to hear the 'Coulin'—"

"Not the 'Coulin,' Dove," he implored.

"When Miss Brunel comes, perhaps she will play it. The music is simple. Put it on the piano—and—and send for her."

He himself went for her—out into the bright light of that fresh spring morning. Annie Brunel, when he found her, was in her poor lodgings, dressed in the simple black dress in which he had last seen her.

"I was going up to see Dove," she said, "when I heard she had sent for me. But—is there any thing the matter?"

"Dove is ill," he said abruptly. "I—I can not tell you. But she wants you to come and—play a piece of music for her."

Neither of them spoke a word all the way to the house. When Annie Brunel, pale, and calm, and beautiful, went to the girl, and took up her white hand and kissed her, there was a pleased smile on Dove's face.

"Why didn't they tell me you were ill?" she said. "I should have been here before."

"I know that," said Dove, in a whisper, "for—for you have always been kind to me. You have come in time—but I am too weak to tell you—ask Will—the betrothal—"

The brief explanation was speedily given; and then Dove said,

"I am very tired. Will you go into the next room, and play me the 'Coulin;' and when you come back—"

She went to Dove's piano, and found there the air which she knew so well. And as she played it, so softly that it sounded like some bitter, sad leave-taking that the sea had heard and murmured over, Dove lay and listened with a strange look on her face. Will's hand was in hers, and she drew him down to her, and whispered,

"I could have been so happy with you, Will; so very happy, I think. But I had no right to be. Where is the—the paper I was to sign?"

He brought it and put it on the table beside

her bed; and Miss Brunel came into the room, and went over to Dove.

"That is the paper I must sign," said the girl. "But how can I? Will you—will you do it for me? But come closer to me and listen, for I have—a secret—"

When Annie Brunel bent down her head to listen, Dove drew the wedding-ring off her finger, kissed it tenderly, and put it on her companion's hand; and then she said, looking Annie in the face with a faint smile in the peaceful violet eyes, "It is your own name you must sign."

At the same moment she lay back exhausted, and to Mr. Anerley, who had hurriedly stepped forward to take her hand, she sighed wearily "I am so tired; I shall rest." And presently a beautiful, happy light stole over the girlish features; and he heard her murmur indistinctly—as if the words were addressed to him from the other world—the old familiar line, "*Meghily, meghily shall I sleep now.*"

They were the last words that Dove uttered; and the cause of the last smile that was on her sweet face.

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H E T T Y.

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF

"STRETTON," "GEOFFREY HAMLYN," "RAVENSHOE," &c., &c.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1869.



H E T T Y.

CHAPTER I.

REBECCA'S REASONS FOR MARRYING ANY BODY WHO WOULD TAKE HER.

IN one of the narrowest and dullest lanes in the neighborhood of Walham Green lived George Turner, Esq., Solicitor, of Gray's Inn. His house was the largest in the lane, had certainly pretensions to be, or to have been, a "gentleman's" house, for there was a coach-house and stable beside it; and the garden before and behind was full three-quarters of an acre.

The other houses in the lane were eight-roomed, semi-detached, brown brick boxes of houses; with long gardens in front, and little back-yards, with a water-but and a clothes-line behind. They were miserable little places; yet Rebecca Turner, the youngest daughter, while lolling and yawning, could envy their inhabitants the possession of the key many times a day.

For there was life among them. Those among them who were thrifty, or well to do, or childless, or whose children were good, had pretty plots of flowers even; but this was rare, for there were too many children; and so, on a washing-day, the clothes-lines and poles were always up in the front-garden, stamped hard and black by a hundred little feet. Nay, there was another reason against flowers. The landlord of that lane did not see his way to new palings; and so, if you wanted flowers, you must keep them in repair yourself. Yet there was life enough there. The neighbors—the women—dawdled into one another's houses, and gossiped—nay, now and then, but very seldom, quarreled. Once there was a fire; and Miss Turner, the precise elder daughter, seeing them running, hoped it was not *their* house. "No such luck," said Miss Rebecca, with such singular emphasis that her elder sister let her be.

Turner's house, or The Cedars, stood back from the road, in a blotch of mangy grass, and a blotch of mangy, soot-stained gravel, and accounted for its apparent usurped title by one miserable stump and one miserable bough of the tree of Lebanon, which solitary bough pointed meekly and sorrowfully to where its brother had once stood. Behind the house was a bit of kitchen-garden, and a bit of grass unmown for years; which would have been something had it been secluded, but even that was denied you. It ended in a wide, wild waste of market-garden, stretching away acre after acre. The timber on the estate consisted of a broken-down mulberry-tree and a large quantity of sooty lilac.

The house, though in habitable repair, was in that half state of dilapidation which is sometimes a good deal more melancholy than a really good

downright ruin. The ruin says to you, "Here, come here, I belong to you as much as to any one now; come, and I will tell you stories;" and tells them to you accordingly; whereas the half-dilapidated house says only, "We have secrets here yet." Turner's house was dark red brick, with a high tile roof, perpendicular to the top of the garret-windows, and then sloping like another—the most hideous of roofs; its door was approached by high steps, and the windows of the living-rooms were long and narrow, with thick wooden frames and bulgy glass panes; some were with a knob in the middle, which made looking out of window a luxury difficult to indulge in: internally, the furniture was principally of horse-hair and dark mahogany. And Miss Rebecca wished it was burned down.

In this house she lived. Mr. Turner was in religion of the strictest form of Calvinism and Sabbatarianism, forbidding any books except theological ones on a Sunday, and never allowing a novel or a book of poetry into the house. There had been a time once when she had been able to escape all this; before she had grown up; but that was all over. She had, unlike her sister, grown up good-looking. The widower, her father, had consulted religious women of the congregation; they had been unanimous; the girl Rebecca was much too pretty to go out by herself. From that time she was a prisoner, for her father was no man to be trifled with. Can one wonder that a high-spirited girl, capable of any kind of pleasure, should one very wet Sunday evening, after chapel and a sermon of an hour, as she was going to bed, emphatically wish she was dead, wish she had never been born, and most particularly wish she had been ugly?

"If I had been as ugly as you, I could have gone any where I chose, and done as I liked. It was old Mother Russel and Mrs. Soper that put *him* up to my being pretty. I wish *they* were dead with all my heart."

"My dear sister Rebecca! After chapel, too!" said her sister Carry, solemnly.

She didn't say she wished *that* was dead; she only clenched her hands and gasped for breath. That was the last of it all—all the dull misery of her life came before her stronger than ever at the mention of chapel, and she cast herself sobbing on the bed.

"I wish somebody would come and marry me," she said; "but there's no chance—no young men ever come near us. I'd marry Jim Akers, I'd marry any body—except that beast," she added, suddenly, with a shrill determination which pointed to a small chance in favor of the beast's prospects, and then by degrees she sobbed herself quiet.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. RUSSEL TELLS MISS SOPER SO MUCH AS SHE KNOWS OF THE FAMILY HISTORY.

The lady so disrespectfully mentioned by Miss Rebecca as old Mother Russel, was taking tea with Miss Soper. Mrs. Russel had been, some said, born at Walham Green; but was certainly, with few exceptions, the oldest inhabitant there; Miss Soper, on the other hand, was a comparatively new-comer. These, it will be remembered, were the two ladies who had given poor Rebecca such very dire offense by persuading her father that she was too pretty to walk out by herself; and, having just talked through some of their other neighbors in whom we are not interested, and having come to the Turners, in whom we are, we will just make bold to listen a little to them.

Mrs. Russel was a fat, heavy woman, whose fat, unlike that of some people, had become physically distressing to her, and had made her cross. She had discovered the solace of spirits, but used them moderately. It is possible that she may have been a good-natured woman once, but the continual distress of her earthly load had made her ill-natured. Religion with her meant a slight excitement and society, but little more.

Miss Soper was a very different woman—pale, gaunt, black, rigid, with a face like a Roman-nosed horse. She had been for some years teacher in a small suburban ladies' school, until she came into a little money, when she retired, with no heart and a small annuity, to Walham Green. It was in her capacity as ex-schoolmistress that she voted on Rebecca's not going out alone. She was consulted as an expert, and left no doubt on the minds of Mrs. Russel and Mr. Turner as to her opinion on *that* score. In her religion she was most deeply sincere, in her duties most rigid; she saw no harm in talking over her neighbors' affairs, and she had a voice like an aged pie-man to do it with.

"That's a bright, clever-looking girl, that Rebecca Turner," she said. "Quick to learn."

"A deal too quick," said Mrs. Russel.

"She seems quicker than her sister."

"Caroline is a real good pious girl, and takes after her father."

"Rebecca don't, then?" said Miss Soper.

"No, Rebecca is another sort of girl. She looks so like her mother sometimes that I shake like a mould of jelly" (which was an apt illustration). "She takes after her mother; and Turner is a man who washes his dirty linen at home, but I misdoubt he has trouble with her now. If he hasn't, he will."

"Did he have trouble with her mother, then?"

"Do you mean to say you have never heard?" said Mrs. Russel, in solemn *staccato*.

"How could I? I had not come to the Green. Do tell," said Miss Soper, eagerly.

Mrs. Russel took her cup in her hand, and having stirred her tea, used the spoon for rhetorical purposes, and solemnly and immediately began.

"There's never been murder *done* in that house, my dear, for there's many a slip-between cup and lip, but it's been *hollered* often enough. Awful nights have been in that house, my dear, between Turner and his wife," she continued, drawing closer and speaking low; "she yelling

at the top of her voice at him, calling him every bad name she could lay her tongue to; he praying at the top of his voice, to pray the evil spirit out of her, until he'd lose his temper and fixt hold of her, and you'd hear her trying to bite him; and the little children a-screaming, and the maid run away for fear, and all the lane out to listen! Ah, quiet as Turner looks now, he has had something to go through in his time. You may well ask if he had trouble with his wife."

"Was she mad?"

"He never dared say it of her at all events,"

said Mrs. Russel. "I'll tell you all I know. She was a lady. Says you, so are we. I mean a real lady. Says you again, so are we. But I mean a real tip-top carriage lady, you know."

So did Miss Soper, who nodded. "And how did she come to marry him, then?"

"Well, Turner is a good figure of a man, though it was not that. He had got the management of her affairs when she was left a widow, and he managed them well enough to excite her gratitude; and she had been ill-used, and her friends had dropped away, and I fancy she thought she might do worse, and so she had him; and a bad job it was. But if a good sound Protestant marries a Papist and a worldling with his eyes open he must take the consequences."

"A Papist!" almost screeched Miss Soper.

"Mr. Turner marry a Papist!"

"Well, she had a fine penny of money, mind you, and she was a thorough worldling, and careless of religion, and Turner thought he could convert her. We used to have her name down for conversion in the general prayer ever so long until she found it out, and had words with him. But it all came to nothing; she laughed him to scorn when he spoke to her about it, all of which he has told us at experience-meetings; and she found that out, and got furious, and things went on from bad to worse until Caroline being born put things square for a time. But after that Rebecca was born, Mrs. Turner fell ill, and asked for a priest to come to her, she having, of course, gone to mass on her own accord; and he made answer that no priest should cross his doors, not if she was on her death-bed. That was the worst scene she made him, for she started up in a shawl and petticoat to run all the way to Cadogan Terrace by Sloane Street, and had to be fetched back by force. Well, then nothing went right any way, and she seemed to lose head. She accused him of taking her money, and insisted that one of the children should be brought up a Papist, and used to smuggle off Rebecca continually to mass and confession, and such things, and some say got the child baptized into the Romish faith."

"It is extremely probable," said Miss Soper; "and how did it end?"

"It was after a worse row than usual," said Mrs. Russel, lowering her voice again. "It was the worst and the last, and there had been violence—it all came out at the inquest—and she went out somewhere, some said to the public house, but I never saw nothing of that, and others will confirm me; and when she came back he had gone away with little Rebecca, leaving word that she would never see the child no more, for that he had taken it away to save its soul."

"He was a fool to do that," said Miss Soper.

Mrs. Russel eyed her curiously. "You're a

sensible woman, ma'am," she said; "though I doubt if we are right religiously, seeing that he saved it from Popery. But," added the vulgar old gossip, flushing up scarlet, "if my man had come between me and my children in the old times I'd have— But as I was saying, when she hears that, she outs into the lane and carries on to that extent that Mrs. Akin (the washer-woman, you know, my dear soul, Jim Akin's, the coster-monger's, mother, whose mother had been with the barrer for years herself) says she never heard any thing like it. There was nothing low in it—no vulgar language nor swearing—but just downright awful cursing, like that in the Bible; and it frightened all that heard it. Then she went into the house and up stairs; and the maid had run away. And when he came home the neighbors told him what they'd seen, and how the child (that's Caroline now) had been a-crying all the afternoon. And when they burst in there she was a-lying stone-dead at the bottom of the stairs."

"What did the inquest say?"

"Nothing. Whether she fell down, or chucked herself down, there was nothing to show. The child only said that it had found its mamma asleep on her face, and that it wanted its tea, and couldn't make her wake. Well, ma'am, and that's the history of that little mystery."

"I'll go and see 'em," said Miss Soper, emphatically. "What time do they have their tea?"

CHAPTER III.

REBECCA'S LOVER, AND WHAT SHE THOUGHT OF HIM.

MR. TURNER, a man of about sixty, must have been at one time handsome, but now, although his features were good, his complexion was gone; and the continual habit, persisted in for so many years, of self-contemplation, had left an expression which was not very pleasant on his face; a look which an ill-natured person might say was something between a scowl and a sneer, as though he was continually saying, "I am George Turner, that is who I am, and who the deuce are you?" His conversation was, like that of many other men of the same standing, entirely about himself; arguing, one would fancy, from a certain feeling of being wanting in the more ornamental business of life, and from a determination that the hearer should know what an exceeding fine fellow he was.

Partly from religion, and partly from temper, he had been very careful to banish every thing graceful from his house, so that there should not be a snare in it. So he had sternly refused poor Rebecca's, who craved for such things, petitions for cocks and hens, for rabbits—nay, even for one poor little tiny bird. However, in an old house, where there are rats and mice, you must have a cat; and you'll not hinder a cat having kittens. And so it came about that Rebecca had two kittens to play with; and her father, letting himself into the house at half past four on a winter's afternoon, found Rebecca, perfectly happy, lying in the dark before the fire, playing with her two kittens, one of which had a blue ribbon round its neck, and the other a red.

"Get up," he said, "and don't lie there like

a hoyden. Get up, and make yourself tidy. There are people coming to tea."

Rebecca never answered; that would only make her father colorably and openly angry, and she would have had the worst of it. But by long practice in this happy household she had got the trick of annoying him, and yet of keeping within the law.

"Pretty little darlings!" she said, with effusion, as she rose with a cat on each arm. "I wonder if you have immortal souls, dears; if so, they don't seem to be much trouble to you."

"Don't talk such nonsense as that. People would say that you were mad, if they heard you. For a grown girl to be kissing cats, too, and a marriageable girl! Bah!"

"Who's coming to tea, pa?"

"Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper."

"Daniel Lambert and the Old Dragoon. Pa, I wonder if Miss Soper was regularly discharged from the army, or whether she deserted. If I was her I should shave off that mustache, and let my whiskers grow. Who else is coming?"

"Mr. Morley," said Turner, without any open manifestation of anger, for certain reasons;

"and also, I believe, Mr. Hagbut."

"Oh, pa!"

"I am at a loss to conceive why you should make an exclamation at Mr. Hagbut's name," said Turner.

"Are you?" said Rebecca. "I am not. If you were as young and pretty as I am, how would you like such a—minister of the gospel, setting down beside you the whole evening, quoting texts of Scripture to you which bore on the subject of love and marriage. If he wants to marry me, why don't he say so like a man—and get his answer?"

"I should feel highly flattered by Mr. Hagbut's attentions," said Mr. Turner; "and, moreover, I should reflect that his suit was backed by your father. Only, mind one thing, Rebecca—you refuse that good man at your peril. I insist on the match, mind that. You *dare* refuse him, that is all."

Not one word did Rebecca say to this, but left her father secretly fuming with anger. She went up stairs to her room, and began her toilet very slowly and very thoughtfully, and as she thought the face grew darker and darker, until the muscles in it began to quiver, and there grew upon it a look of deep horror and deep loathing terrible to see. She arose stealthily, and went with her candle to a box in the corner of the room, and secretly taking out a book began reading with shaking hands; the book came open easily at the place she wanted, and she was deep in the passage when she was utterly scared by her sister's voice in the room, crying petulantly, "Why, Rebecca, you'll never be ready in time. Mr. Hagbut's come already."

"I'll be ready directly, dear Carry; don't tell on me. It is only one of Sir Walter Scott's novels, and it is so interesting at the end."

"So it seems," said matter-of-fact Carry. "Why, you are as pale as a ghost, and all of a tremble? Now I can see why the ministers forbid us to read such godless rant."

One of Sir Walter Scott's novels, she said. Could it have been the "Bride of Lammermoor?" Heaven forbid!

Although she was going into company which

she disliked, and although there was at least one man there whom she hated, and whom she wished to hate her, yet in the irresistible instinct of beauty she dressed herself prettily, and coming calmly and proudly into the room with a bow, sat down by her sister.

Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper were there, and two ministers, one of whom she had never seen before, but one of them was only known too well.

He was a very large, stout man, with a head the color and shape of an addled egg, with the small end uppermost. He had a furze of-gray hair, and whiskers shaved close in the middle of his cheeks; he had large pale blue, almost opaque eyes, very large ears, and a continual smile on a mouth made for talking. Probably black dress clothes and a white tie was as becoming a dress as exists—on certain people; on him they were hideous; his collarless cravat was a wisp, the lapels of his coat were like elephants' ears, and the coat itself was perfectly straight down the back, so as to set off his great stomach better in profile. His cuffs nearly concealed his great fat hands, and his short, ill-made trousers scarce met his clumsy shoes. The whole man was a protest against beauty or grace of life in any way; to Rebecca he was loathsome, hideous beyond measure; and she was to marry him—unless she herself, alone and unaided, could fight a battle against all her little world. Poor thing! it was hard for her, it was, indeed. Forgive her desperation.

This horrible great moon-calf rose from his chair when she entered, and with a leering conscious smile on his face stood there, following her with his pale eyes, until she sat down. Mrs. Russel looked "arch"—a horrible thing for any body to do off the stage of a third-rate theatre, still more horrible in the case of a fat old woman. Miss Soper, *au fait* at things of this kind, moved from her seat and gave it up to the Rev. Mr. Hagbut, so that he now sat next poor shuddering Rebecca.

"Will you ask a blessing, Mr. Hagbut?"

Smooth came the easy words from that mouth, in the well-practiced, whining falsetto; dextrously quoted were the well-known texts of Scripture, so dextrously that he brought in the Marriage in Cana, and made through that an allusion to earthly marriages. "He has not asked me yet," she thought; "and if I am firm they can't kill me."

His style of talking was what one may be allowed to call spondaic; that is, he lengthened every syllable, and even when he came across one which was unavoidably short he lengthened it as much as possible. Then again he put the emphasis of his sentence just where no one else would have put it, and on the whole was one of the most painfully labored masses of artificiality and affectation ever seen. That the man may have been a good man I do not deny; I have only to do with his effect on Rebecca.

He gave himself, if not the airs of an accepted lover, at least of a man who was sure of his game.

"You heard my discourse the last Sabbath evening, Miss Turner?" he said, bringing his head as near hers as he could.

"I heard it," said Rebecca; "but I did not attend to it."

"The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak," said he, smiling.

"I don't think that the spirit was willing," she answered. "I hate sermons."

This was very confusing, but under these circumstances one must say something.

"The prayer, or the hymn, pleases you better, doubtless?"

"I hate the prayer worse than the sermon, but I like some of the hymns—nay, most of them. I should like the service to be all music, light, and ornament, as it was at the Catholic church where I used to go with my poor mother."

"Vanity, my dear daughter, vanity."

"I don't see any particular vanity about it. Why, when you are praying extempore before a large congregation, and take pains, you are thinking all the time how it will succeed with the congregation. I have watched you."

Really it was very uphill work with this young lady; but see how beautiful she was, and besides she would have a little property. Mr. Hagbut drew nearer still to the shrinking hot form that held the ice-cold heart.

"Are you cold, dear Miss Turner?" he drawled.

"No, I am uncomfortably hot," she snapped out. "I think that I am not well. I think that I shall go nearer the door, if you will let me pass."

He was forced to do so, and with a great gasp she went and sat beside Mr. Morley and her father: her father seeing the Rev. Hagbut, his future son-in-law, looking exceedingly foolish, went to his assistance, and bound up the cracks in that savory vessel, leaving Rebecca sitting with Mr. Morley.

Now Rebecca knew Mr. Morley to be a Dissenting minister, as her father described him, of "great unction;" consequently she regarded him in the light of her natural enemy, and was prepared to do battle with him on the very smallest provocation. She could not, however, avoid confessing that he was a considerable improvement on that other horrible fat man with a head like an egg.

Indeed, she might have said, a very great improvement, indeed. Mr. Morley was a man with a well-shaped head, good and singularly amiable features, hair but slightly grizzled, curling all over his head, a fine deep brown complexion, and a beautiful set of regular white teeth, which contrasted well with the complexion, and which were pretty frequently shown by a manly, kindly smile. He looked a man every inch of him, although his face was gentle even to softness.

He had been watching Rebecca and her troubles. He had been brought here as the friend of Mr. Hagbut, he having to-day preached a sermon for him. He had, of course, been welcomed heartily by Mr. Turner, who in the openness of his heart toward a minister and a friend of Mr. Hagbut, had let him know the high honor which was in store for Rebecca. So Mr. Morley had watched while talking to Mr. Turner; and he had seen brutish, low, calculating admiration on the one side, and on the other a depth of loathing aversion which was terrible to him. He said to Mr. Turner,

"They will be happy, you think?"

"Any woman would be happy with such a man of God as Mr. Hagbut." And when he had said it he scorned himself. Yet for mere decen-

cy's sake, seeing that Morley knew, he put in the rider, "If she does not love him in the way of the world now, she will get to do so. Hundreds of girls would give ten years of their life to be in her place."

"That is doubtless true," said Morley, quietly, and the conversation went on to other matters, until it so chanced that the beautiful girl, with rage and fury in her heart, came and sat beside him.

He had a pleasantly-modulated voice, a voice of cultivation too, and he spoke to her.

"The wind has quite gone down," he said.

"Has it?" she answered. "I have not noticed."

"Yes, it has quite gone down. But it blew hard down at our place last night: I expected some of my chimney-pots down several times. The *Eliza*, in the outside tier, broke from her moorings, and has stove the bows of one of the screw colliers; yes, it blew very hard from east, shifting to southeast. Are you a sailor at all?"

"I know nothing of the sea."

"Pity; you should. I am half a sailor myself. I should know something about it, for half my work lies among sailors. Have you never been to sea at all, then?"

"I have never left this most utterly abominable spot in all my life."

"Well, I don't want to flatter you," said Morley, "and so I will say that it is intolerably dull. My place is considered almost the very worst and most wretched in London. I am surrounded with sin, crime, and occasionally fury and murder; but I would sooner be there than here."

"Where do you live, then, Mr. Morley?" said Rebecca, becoming interested.

"At Limehouse."

"Is it uglier than here?"

"Very far uglier. This place is, in all that the eye desires, a paradise to it. If an educated man, like myself, were doomed to live in Limehouse in idleness, he would break his heart."

"You have not broken yours."

"No; I am too busy," he replied, laughing.

"Where is it?" asked Rebecca.

"Down the river. Down where the ships are."

"Where do the ships go to?"

"All parts of the world. You can get on board a ship there, and go any where."

"Do any of them go to countries where there are no chapels?"

"Plenty, I am sorry to say."

"Where you can do exactly as you please, and not be called to account for it afterward?"

"Certainly not. No such ships sail, because there is no country such as you describe. Not in all the countless millions of stars which you see on a frosty night is there any such country. Such ships would have plenty of passengers, though."

"It is a weary world, then," said Rebecca.

"Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"Certainly I do."

"Some do not. Is it not so?" asked Rebecca.

"Scarcely any," said Mr. Morley.

"Yet it is such a comfortable doctrine, I should have thought it would be popular. To think, to believe, that death *did* end it all, and that there was to be no more trouble, no more headache, no more anger. It is really not so, then?"

"Assure yourself of that. Ask yourself, Is it conceivable that the *will* which causes you, so mysteriously, by acting on your muscles, to raise your hand to your head—the will which may prompt you to a noble deed, or save you from a shameful fate—can *die*? I could speak at length of these things to you, but there is your father beckoning."

She rose without another word, and went toward her father, who was sitting beside Mr. Hagbut. He moved away, and pointed to his seat.

She, however, stood, and Mr. Hagbut, rising, took her right hand between his two fat ones, and looked her in the face with his sweetest smile.

She was deadly pale. There was too much fat covering the nerves of Mr. Hagbut's hand, or he would have felt, surely, the creeping horror in hers. It shrank so from between his palms that it slid out and fell dead and pale by her side before he had time to speak.

"I was going to ask," said the unconscious nobody, "a little favor of my sweet Christian sister. I was going to ask if I might see her to-morrow morning for half an hour, just to ask one little question, to which I think I shall have a favorable answer. May I come?"

"O Lord, yes!" gasped Rebecca. "Come to-morrow and let us get it over," and so left the room abruptly.

"She has taken him," said Miss Soper to Mrs. Russel, as they blundered home together in the fog.

"Lucky girl! of course she has," replied Mrs. Russel.

"He will have trouble with her," said Miss Soper. "I know girls. I've had girls throw themselves out of window before now; and he will have trouble with her."

"Well, if you come to that, Henrietta," said Mrs. Russel, growing confidential in the dark, and in anticipation of the little hot supper which Miss Soper and she were about to partake of together, and blundering up against Miss Soper in her fat walk, "she will have trouble with him. For although he is a Saint, he keeps his saint's temper pretty much in the cupboard; she'll have to manage him, that's what she'll have to do. I know men, and the management of them. I've had to manage them."

Mrs. Russel's knowledge of men was confined to two, her husband whom she had managed into death by worry and *delirium tremens*; and her son whom she had managed into enlisting into the 40th regiment, now in New Zealand, from which island he had dutifully written, saying, "that now the water was betwixt 'em, he could express his mind more free." Which he proceeded to do.

Morley and Hagbut walked eastward together through the fog, and Morley was the first to speak.

"Hagbut," he said, "are you going to marry that girl?"

"Assuredly, my brother," said Hagbut.

"Have you thought of what you are doing?" asked Morley.

"Indeed, yes, with prayer," said Hagbut.

"But, see here, Hagbut. You are as shrewd as another. Let us speak as though we were of the world, worldly. Are you not making a great fool of yourself?"

"I think not, brother Morley," answered Hagbut, far too shrewd to give up such advantages as a religious phraseology gave him. "I think, looking at the matter even as one unredeemed and still of this world, that it promises well. The girl is fair to look upon, and she will have a little property."

"But do you think she cares for you?"

"Undoubtedly. No constraint has been put upon her, and she has as good as taken me. Our roads diverge here, dear brother. Good-night."

Omnibus after omnibus passed Mr. Morley, yet somehow he preferred to walk, and set his head steadily for Fenchurch Street, dark as the night was. And as he walked he thought, and thought of one thing only—this approaching marriage. It seemed to him so monstrous a proceeding altogether. If the girl consented it would have been bad enough, but against her will—

Why the girl's beauty alone ought to insure her a good match, an excellent provision with any one of a dozen young men of her own age; and she had fortune too, he heard; and for the whole of it to be offered up at the shrine of that ugly, windy donkey, with the education of a charity-school boy, and the manners of a boor. How pitiful a case for one so beautiful! And then he went on thinking of her beauty, and pitying her all the way home. Which was not good for the peace of mind of the Rev. Alfred Morley.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH REBECCA LETS HER SENTIMENTS BE KNOWN, NOT ONLY TO HER LOVER, BUT TO THE WORLD IN GENERAL.

AND, alas! for poor Rebecca. She was in very evil case indeed. She would have cried aloud for help from man, but there was none to help her; as for prayer, religion had been for a long time hateful to her, so that way out of her trouble was denied her.

The phase of anger and scorn in which her soul had staid so long was gone now she was alone. The reaction from it was a feeling of plaintive, pathetic loneliness, infinitely mournful. This in its turn produced silent tears; they in their turn produced calm, and calm thought.

Thought sadly lame, incoherent, unconstructive, but thought still. Here was an evil, to her most real and horrible, to be escaped from. What were her chances alone against the world?

Sheer angry persistent defiance and wrath? How would that do? Well enough as long as it lasted; but could she depend on it to last forever? Would they not beat her by sheer perseverance? Hagbut and her father were uncompressible men of strong physical capacity: could they not wear her out? merely tire her out? For look at her now; tired out in body by her long effort, as weak as a child, sitting on the floor crying and calling on her dead mother, without even energy to go to bed. A fortnight's fight with her father would reduce her to this state permanently, and they would be able to do as they liked with her. That would not do.

Craft, procrastination? No, that would not do with her father. She knew him too well for that. It would only weaken her hand, and the

end would be just the same. No, try again, poor Rebecca!

The Roman Catholics! Her face brightened, and her breath came fast as she thought of that. If she ran away to the Roman Catholics they would take her in for her mother's sake, and shelter her behind their altars. She believed that she had been baptized into their Church; if so, they would know in Cadogan Street, and that would give them a right over her. It seemed for a moment a brilliant idea, but it was soon dulled. The case of Miss T—— was fresh then, and she knew that as a minor (she was but nineteen), a policeman had only to trace her, her father to demand her, and she would be brought back a culprit, in a worse case than before.

Evils fairly faced vanish away one-half of them into thin air. She had found no solution as yet, yet she felt if she could only go on thinking, that one would come. It made her almost glad in her desperation, when she first got the faith, that she certainly should find a way out of her trouble if she only thought long enough. So that, when some wandering fiend said to her, "If the worst comes to the worst, Putney bridge is close by; and when the tide is ebbing strong there is an undersuck there which gives back nothing alive," she rose, laughed, and shaking out her black, sharply-curved hair before the glass, looked at her beauty, and said: "Not for him. I will bed in no Thames ooze for such as he."

"Suicide—no!" she said, proudly; and all in a moment, as she said the words, a crude, shapeless idea came rolling into her brain, dazing her and making her gasp.

Whence came it, this frightful amorphous idea? Was it only the last result of some mental sorites, tangled beyond the possibility of reduction; or was it a direct suggestion from the unseen powers, in which we all believe in one way or another? It was so shapeless at first that it made her head whirl; but as she, in her desperation, steadily faced it, it crystallized itself, and took form. The form it took was ugly enough, yet it looked beautiful to her beside the hideous fate to which she was to be condemned to-morrow.

Suicide! Why did lost women commit physical suicide? Why did weak, cowardly women gather courage to leap off dizzy places into dark water—off places which they shuddered to look at with their protecting lovers' arms round their waist? What gave them this preternatural courage? Why, they had committed suicide before. They had done that which left them no place in this English world. Done that which made them a loathing and a scorn to father, brother, sister—to every one, save mother—and she had none. What if she were to pretend to do that which would make it at all events utterly impossible for this horrible old man to marry her! What then? Was there no escape there? There was.

For her father she had no pity whatever. He had brought it on himself, and it would do him good. Her mother had been her only friend, and he had ill-treated her mother. She knew the whole of the old story, partly from memory and partly from cross-examining her foolish sister Caroline. She had no pity for him. He knew well her hatred for this match, and had pitilessly thrust it on. Let him look to himself.

But here came a difficulty. How was she, after she had gained her own object, to rehabilitate herself? What means should she use to prove herself utterly stainless and innocent before the world, whenever it should suit her to do so? She walked up and down an hour thinking over this. Without holding in her hand irrefragable proofs of her own innocence, she would have played her part too well, and would have made it impossible for her, at the proper time, to hurl back the scorn of their miserable little world upon itself. The way out of this difficulty came on her suddenly, like a clear flash of light; and she laughed at her own stupidity in not thinking of it before.

The night wore on, and she packed away her clothes in her drawers, putting a few necessities in a carpet-bag. She counted out her money—£18 odd—more than sufficient for her purpose. Then she sat down and wrote a short letter to her father:

"SIR,—It has pleased you, in spite of my frequently-expressed repugnance, to urge on my marriage with Mr. Hagbut.

"As I desire to remain single, I have chosen, between two evils, to disgrace myself and my family sooner than contract such a monstrous alliance.

"Your daughter, "REBECCA."

It was now broad daylight until half past six. At which time Jim Akin, the coster-monger, and Mr. Spicer, the sweep, saw her come out of the door with her carpet-bag, close it behind her, and walk straight away, apparently in the direction of Putney bridge.

"Off at last," said Jim Akin.

"Wonder she hadn't gone afore," said Mr. Spicer. "She's a' stood it a dratted sight longer ner I thought she would. Who's the young man, then?"

"Doubt there ain't nerry one," said Jim Akin, "I ain't seen none round."

"She is off to the Catholics, then," said Mr. Spicer. "Her mother was one, and so is my wife. They'll take good care on her."

"I am glad of that," said Jim Akin, the coster-monger; "for she is a gallus kindly, good wench. She's got what I call a young 'art, that gal has. She nigh kep my old girl when I was in—in the 'orspital."

Mr. Spicer, possibly from a habit of regarding the world from his early youth out of the tops of chimneys very early in the morning, when there was little smoke, was a philosopher. This, also, was one of his clean days; he had had his bath overnight, having sent one of his assistants to the "black bed," and was a respectable tradesman instead of a grimy ruffian. He philosophized thus:

"Gals is much the same as boys is. I've hammered and leathered a boy into a cross flue, and he has choked hisself for spite. I've coaxed another boy into that self-same flue, and he has gone through it like a ferret. That girl has been leathered too much morally. I hope she will do no worse than going to the Catholics. Meanwhile it ain't, neither for you nor for me, to give the office on her."

Mr. Hagbut, coming for his answer at ten o'clock, found a scared household. Turner had not gone to business. He received Mr. Hagbut in the parlor.

Turner's state of mind was fury, nothing short

of it. His daughter had utterly disgraced him, and perhaps it was fortunate for her that she was beyond his reach. At work in Turner's mind just then there were all the elements which, boiled in a caldron together, produce a thorough hell-broth of blind anger. His religion was very precious to him. I can not say why, for it gave him no comfort, but one sees it every day; and his pet scheme had been to increase his influence in this sect by the marriage of his daughter to their most popular and most *répandu* minister. It was to him like a marriage with a duke: here his vanity was touched. Again, he prided himself on being master in his own house, and had been defied and beaten. Once again, as a man of the world, he knew that he had been an utter fool in trying to force that beautiful, self-willed daughter of his on this dreadful, crawling old imbecile: here his self-love was touched. Once more, he saw now that he had acted like a fool throughout: and here was the *auctor mali*, the dreadful, unctuous old man, with a head like a bladder of lard, turning his hands over and over before him, and asking how his sweet sister was this bright morning.

Turner, who *was* a man, saw the utter folly of the whole thing in one moment.

"If by your sweet sister you mean my daughter," he said, "she is utterly ruined and lost. She has run away, God knows whither and with whom."

"Our dear sister fled?" said Mr. Hagbut.

A man can not, however religious, continually sit in law courts without knowing something of the ordinary language of his fellow-men. Mr. Turner was excited and angry, and, in his language at least, fell away from grace.

"I speak plainly. She has run away; and, upon my soul and body, I admire her for it. I wish I could get the wench back again, though. There were worse wenches than she. You and I are two fools, I doubt, Hagbut."

Mr. Hagbut began, "Peradventure—"

"Say perhaps," said Turner, testily.

"Perhaps, then," said Mr. Hagbut, solemnly, "your other daughter is at home, likewise the handmaiden?"

"What do you want with them?"

"Only, in the presence of Christian witnesses, to say that it can not be with me and your daughter as it was before. The few sheep in the wilderness—"

"What do you mean, man?" said Turner, sternly. "Do you mean that it is all over between you and my daughter?"

"Doubtless," said Mr. Hagbut. "The flock—"

"Hang the flock!" snapped Turner. "Can't you see that my poor girl would not touch you with a pair of tongs; that she would sooner ruin her reputation (and she is a high-spirited girl) than have anything to do with you? Of course it is all over. We were fools to think of it."

"Doubtless," said Mr. Hagbut.

"Look here, man," said Turner, speaking as the man and the lawyer; "there must be one thing understood about my girl. She has left her father's roof, and I don't know where she is gone. But if you, or any of your good women, dare to say one word against her character, without legal proof, by the living Lord I'll make you sweat for it, or I'm no lawyer! Perhaps I've been wrong with the wench, perhaps I was wrong

with her mother; but you mind what I tell you."

So Rebecca had won her first move. She would have laughed had she known it, but she did not. She had taken down a tress of gray hair, and had twisted it in one of her own black curls, and had said: "How long will it be, Elizabeth, before they make my hair as gray as yours with their nonsense?" And old Elizabeth had said: "Well, we shall see the sea at the next station, and I have not seen it for forty years."

That was not a lucky day for Mr. Hagbut. He could not go near any one without being sympathized with, which was very terrible. Some lamented with him, some piously congratulated him on his escape; while the more influential of his congregation, those who could not be well refused, made him tell them all about it. A jilted man always looks more or less of a fool. The world has always put in force its penalty of contempt against those who are unsuccessful in love or war; and Mr. Hagbut knew that he was undergoing it, and, using his vast powers of looking foolish, he really succeeded in doing so. A most unsuccessful day!

Meanwhile, one thing was certain. Whatever had become of Rebecca, she would be persecuted by no more offers of marriage.

CHAPTER V.

THE LITTLE FRIENDS.

LEADER STREET, Chelsea, is one of those streets which utterly and entirely belong to the poor. It is a place where you may see the very poor at home in person, and looking at the stalls and shops where they traffic for their daily bread, may guess how hard it is for them to live.

The largest and most frequented shop in one street was the coal and green-grocery shop, dealing also in potatoes, bundles of fire-wood, and ginger-beer. The grocer's was a Saturday-night shop, as was also the butcher's. The green-grocer's, however, supplied some littler want, which might arrive at any moment. Half a hundred of coals, a bundle of wood, a couple of pounds of potatoes, were things in demand all the week round. Tibbeyes were seldom still.

Tibbey himself was a very little man, like an innocent little bird, with a little hop, and a twittering way of serving in his shop that reminded you of a robin or some other soft-billed bird. Mrs. Tibbey was much larger, blonde, stout, and gray, and she looked as though she might have been something of a beauty in her youth; and, indeed, she was beautiful now, as far as an expression of gentle goodness could make her so.

This couple were perfectly devoted to one another, and were uneasy at the absence of either. In religion they were Primitive Methodists; and they were childless.

Except indeed by adoption, as it were. One child, whom Mrs. Tibbey had nursed, was very near to both their hearts, and always remembered in their prayers night and morning. They had risen from their knees, and almost had her name in their mouths when the door opened and she stood before them.

Rebecca, ready dressed for traveling. Before

they had time to ejaculate she said, "Libber, dear, I have run away to you." Whereupon Mrs. Tibbey, as a preliminary measure, folded her in her arms.

"And I want my breakfast, please; I am so hungry. Please put some more tea in, Mr. Tibbey, for I shall want a deal, and I hate it weak. And could you let me have the cat? Then I will tell you all about it."

She was as willful with these good souls as she was at home; but, ah! with what a different willfulness.

"Yes," she said, as they began bustling about, "I have run right away, Mr. Tibbey. They were going to marry me to Mr. Hagbut."

"My pretty bird," said Mrs. Tibbey, pausing in her preparations to swell in pigeon-like indignation, and coo out her wrath, "my pretty love, how dared they?"

"Like their impudence, was it not?" replied Rebecca, very anxious not to make the matter look too serious. "Well, you know I was not going to stand *that*—far from it—and so I have run away to you, Libber, to make my terms from a distance. And you will lend her to me for three days, won't you, Mr. Tibbey, just to take care of me?"

"Miss Rebecca," said the little man, "you may, I think, depend on Elizabeth, as heretofore, always doing what is right. And what is right in this case, my dear young lady, is that she should go with you where you will, so that hereafter the finger—do I use too strong an expression, and give offense?"

"Just what I mean," cried Rebecca.

"Then I will use that strong expression—that the finger of scorn may never be p'inted. And indeed," continued the good little man, with the ferocious air of that most pugnacious bird the robin, "I should like to see the man who would dare."

What could Rebecca do but kiss him? She did it, however; and Mr. Tibbey toasted a muffin with many ominous shakes of the head, as though he would say, "I shall have to look some of these folks up some day, if they don't mind their manners."

It was a dingy little parlor enough (though scrupulously neat), and smelt of the stock in trade, in addition to the smell which I have smelt elsewhere, but have always, from early association, associated with Leader Street, underlying the whiff of red herring, cabbage, and coal, with perhaps a whiff of turpentine from the bundles of fire-wood; there was the true, low-London odor of soot and confined humanity. Yet what a free little paradise it was to Rebecca! The inevitable going home was days off in the dim distance as yet. She was free, and with those who loved her; her heart was so light that she could have sung aloud.

These simple, gentle Methodists, primitive in more than their methodism, saw nothing very extraordinary in the step which Rebecca had taken. It seemed to them that she had acted with singular discretion in coming straight to them. Living there as they did, in perfect purity and innocence, with sin and vice and poverty all around them, they were well used to far more terrible things than the mere fact of a young lady, sore-bested by an uncongenial marriage, taking refuge with them. Only one

remark did Mrs. Tibbey make on the subject during breakfast.

"Why, my dear soul, your good pa must be mad to think of such a thing! Why, he is sixty!"

"He is very rich," said Mr. Tibbey, blowing a saucer of tea. "He is the richest minister in that communion. He got no less than twenty-five thousand—pound with his last wife. She was the widdier Ackerman of Cheyne Walk, and he convinced her of sin, and married her."

"Law!" said Mrs. Tibbey, evidently not disinclined to hear more. "That would be a great snare for a minister. Got all her money, did he?"

"Every shilling," said Mr. Tibbey, holding out his cup for some more tea. "It was thought down the river-side way that her cousin, Mrs. Morley, would have had some of it, for she brought him into the house. But she didn't."

"What Mrs. Morley was that?" asked Rebecca, interested.

"Minister Morley's wife of Lime-us 'ole, my dear. She is dead some years now. Overworked herself, trapesing round after him among the poor of his communion, as lives round the 'ole, and up Ratcliff 'ighway, and all along shore there to Wapping. And she died, poor dear. Ah! the folks in their communion say that she was never truly awakened, and fell away from grace to the extent of refusing the ordinances altogether. But he loved her as I love Elizabeth. And she died."

"I know Mr. Morley," said Rebecca, eagerly.

"Then, my dear, you know a man who is as a sweet savor in God's nostrils. He is not of our communion on this earth; but we shall know him in heaven, and her too, maybe."

"What was Mr. Morley?" asked Rebecca.

"A gentleman, my dear."

"I thought so," said Rebecca.

"Yes, a gentleman and a scholar," said Mr. Tibbey; "with more of the knowledge of this world, and of science—falsely so called—than is good for a true Christian; for the knowledge of this world is vanity."

"I should like to judge for myself about that," thought Rebecca.

"He *were* a doctor, but he got converted, and joined their communion. He was from Cambridge College—one of the Simonites, I think they call 'em—but he pitched it all up when he got converted. There is the shop. Now you and Elizabeth see what you are going to do." And so the good man went out to weigh coals.

"Elizabeth," said Rebecca, "we must go from here this morning. Are you afraid to go to Broadstairs?"

"Not in the least. Would, indeed, very much like it."

"Then get ready," was all that Rebecca said; and the good woman departed to do so. The simple woman was entirely at the girl's disposal. She dreaded nothing but sin, and as far as that was concerned would have trusted her darling any where. But she knew also, that as long as she kept by the girl her fair fame could not be touched; and she went with cheerful recklessness.

It was not long before they had found an omnibus in the King's Road. An hour and a half

afterward they were whirling along through the chalk-pits of Kent toward the sea. In the evening they were having tea together at an open window in a little cottage, with the sea gossiping to them at their feet; the Foreland a dim black wall, close on their right, and the white-winged ships creeping away to happy lands, where there was no chapel and no Sundays.

So said Rebecca. "It is good for me to be here," she said; "I could stand every thing except that man, if they would let me come here three days in the year. I could live six months in the recollection, and the next six on the anticipation. Libber, dear, let us run away again next year."

It was pleasant enough by daylight, it was pleasant enough by moonlight; but in the dark, dark morning, when the moon was down, and she awoke in the dark in a strange room, how was it then? Ghastly, horrible! What frightful machinery was this she had put in motion for the temporary destruction of her own good name and her father's? And how was it at that weary, ghostly old house at Walham Green? What were they saying of her? And she must go back to it in three days—a ruined girl. Would she dare do so? or would she die of fright, of sheer terror, as she approached it? There was the horrible old house, and there waited her angry father at the door. She had only taken the sole means to save herself from a fate worse than death; and now, in the darkness, she felt like a murderess and an outcast. What had she done that God should plague her so?

She could lie no longer in her horror. She rose and went to the window. The very blessed sea talked no longer under her windows, but had gone far out on to the sands, and was whispering there. There was no light in the sky, and there was darkness and terror in her soul.

Darkness and terror! The crowning horror in Frankenstein is the closed room where the monster must be. Her crowning horror was the old house at Walham Green, to which she must return and meet her father. The men who study a certain kind of wickedness say that what is wanted with women is opportunity. I believe that if the Rev. Mr. Hagbut had been able to take advantage of his opportunity, and had pressed his suit just then, poor Rebecca would have accepted him and thanked him. As she was in the dark, in the strange room, that man, coarse brute as he was, would have been a release from the closed, dull, disgraced house at home, with all its traditions and respectabilities violated in her wildly audacious person.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN.

THESE were night-thoughts, how different were those of the day! The sea had come back and was rippling and plashing crisply at her feet. The bright sun was overhead, and a brisk east wind was driving the ships past the downs and down the channel. A pleasant sight. The outward-bound ones, full-breasted, crowded with canvas, gay; the home-going ones, sailless, melancholy, towed by steamers against the wind; however, one need only look at the outward-

bound ones just now, in three days' time one may think of the others.

Many ships went to and fro before Rebecca was tired of looking at them. She got more and more interested in them as time went on, asking all manner of questions about them from the boatmen and others on the beach; simple cockney questions, which puzzled those she asked in her very simplicity; even when her weary head was turned homeward they were still in her mind's eye.

Her despair at going back was so dull that it was nearly painless. "What signifies a little agony more or less?" Here, however, had been three days from which they could not deprive her; they would last her a long time these three days.

She came home about nine o'clock on the Saturday night. Her father opened the door, and she passed in quite silently, and taking off her bonnet, sat down, whereupon her sister Caroline began to cry, which assisted Mr. Turner in opening the conversation.

"You may well cry, my poor child," he began; "you must be worn out with this three days' anxiety, my dear; your sister seems none the worse for her disgraceful escapade."

"I am hungry and I want my supper," was all she said. "You can scold while I eat it. Only make a finish and end of it as soon as you can."

"Rebecca, where have you been, and what have you been doing?" said her father.

"I am not going to tell you," she replied; "I am not going to say one word."

"Are you aware that Mr. Hagbut's visits have permanently ceased, in consequence of your extraordinary conduct, and that your character is not worth that?"

"It was you who drove me to this course by your cruel abetting of that most unnatural marriage. If my mother had been alive you would not have dared to do it. Have you any thing more to say?"

"I have," said Turner, getting thoroughly angry; "your sister's character and position are affected."

"What, old Carry; why what has she been doing?"

"I mean that her position is affected through you. Are you aware that young Mr. Vergil seemed exceedingly likely to pay attention to your sister, and that your behavior has rendered such a course impossible on the part of any member of such an exceedingly strict family?"

"Give Carry the money you were going to give me in addition to her own, and he will come fast enough, I'll warrant you. My poor old Carry," she went on, kissing her sister, "I hope I have not lost you your sweet-heart. They drove me to it, you know."

Carry only introduced an imbecile whimper into her crying, as though she had been playing the organ and pulled out another stop. The stop would not go in again, and so she arose swiftly and went hysterically up stairs.

"Poor Carry," said Rebecca, dolefully, "I am very sorry for her; she would have liked the persistent self-inflicted misery of that Vergil family, and would have enjoyed herself thoroughly." So saying, she rose and rang the bell, and when the maid came, ordered supper.

When the maid was gone Mr. Turner had a few more words to say. "You are carrying matters coolly, Rebecca. But there is one thing I wish you distinctly to understand. The next time you leave my house without my permission you leave it for good."

"I quite understand that! You drove me out of it, and I went for my own purposes. I shall not go again. Have you any thing more to say?"

"Nothing at present."

"This may seem an unpropitious time to say what I am going to say, but I will say it, nevertheless," resumed Rebecca, very quietly and calmly. "Father, I remember something, and I know more. I know that this has always been a miserable and most unhappy house. I know that you and my mother were bitter enemies, instead of being as husband and wife should be. I know that all your recollections of my poor mother are painful, revolting, shocking; and I know that I being like her in person and temper have kept them alive. We have never been friends. Say that it has been my fault. I say that I am tired of it, and wish to be friends; I am sick of this everlasting antagonism of will between us; it has done no good. I have resisted you, but you are as obstinate as ever; you have tried to coerce me, with what success I leave the last three days to tell. Why should this battle—this unnatural battle go on? Can not you let me love you? Such a little yielding on your part would make a heaven out of this most miserable world. Will you answer?"

Not one word would he answer, except to say, "Have you any thing more to advance?"

"Yes. I left here three days ago a desperate, hardened woman, casting my good name to the winds to save myself from a fate worse than death, which you had prepared for me. During those three days I have been lapped in love—a love abundant and never failing, and surrounded by a religion purer and gentler than yours, father; a religion which hopeth all things, and believeth all things. And in spite of my cold bearing and my hard words, I have come back softened and purified. Father, life is not so very long, and we shall, I suppose, never part again. If I have said hard and bitter things since I came into the house, will you forgive them me as I forgive what you have said, and let us learn to love one another?"

No. His heart was dumb to it. He had never yielded to the mother, was it likely he would yield to the daughter? He told her in a surly voice to show her repentance and amendment by duty and obedience, and then began his supper, as she did also, feeling obstinate, angry, and humiliated, but also having "a mighty disposition to cry."

She spoke next, hard as iron. "My health will suffer if I am entirely confined to this house, and you would scarcely wish that. May I walk up and down the lane if I promise not to go out of it? You may set Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper to watch me, if you like; or, if you think it worth having, I will give you my word of honor."

"You may go from one end of the lane to the other, but no further. I'll have no scandals any more. I ain't so rich as some think, but I'm well trusted—very few dream how much. And

my good name is more precious to me than any money. And I've tried to keep it good," he went on, in a loud excited manner. "And any other would have made thousands where I've made hundreds; and no one has ever dragged my name in the dirt except your mother and you. And I served God faithful," he went on, now beginning to weep, poor fellow. "And I tried to keep my name clean: the greatest in the land have said to me, 'Turner, you are not a lawyer, you know, you are a friend, we can trust you here, your name is unspotted;' and God has afflicted me like this. First your mother, and then you."

Rebecca's bolder and more generous nature, which indeed was ill-directed, the main cause of her petulance, was thoroughly aroused. She went to him and took both his hands, saying, quickly:

"Father! father! your good name shall not suffer from me. I am as innocent as the day. I can prove my innocence at any moment. Do you think that I have done any thing unworthy of you? Do you think that I did not have my proofs behind me as clear as noon?"

"Proofs! silly girl, yes; but who will believe them? You little know this wretched world and its tongues. Do you think that any thing will ever quiet old Russel and old Soper's tongues? You are a fool if you do."

"And who are they?" asked Rebecca, loftily.

"The tongues of the world we live in. The tongues which would turn against me first of all, and ruin me in our religious connection, if any thing went wrong. You don't know the world, and are a fool."

"I wish you had been away with me these three days, father; you might have got to despise this little, squalid world of ours."

But he remained sulky and silent. Yet in a surly strange manner he took her into his confidence before he went to bed.

"You are a bold, courageous girl," he growled. "I needn't ask that, this week's experience shows that."

"I believe that I have good courage, father."

"That's lucky, because your sister Carry is a nervous fool. And you are a light sleeper, too, I know."

"Yes, the slightest thing awakes me."

"Then see if you can make yourself useful. If you hear the very slightest noise in the night, you run to my bedroom just as you are, shake me, and pull me out of bed. You will find a light burning. I am apt to be mazed and stupid when first awakened. Are you afraid of fire-arms?"

"I never saw any. I will do what you tell me. I will trust you thoroughly."

He went to a drawer in the side-board, and came back with a Deane and Adams revolver in his hand.

"See here," he said. "If I am not fairly awake, you will find this on the stand by my bed's head. If any man comes into my room before I am ready, take it—so—hold the barrel toward him—so—and keep pulling the trigger back—so. And screech murder the while. Can you do that?"

"I will try. But why is this? Have you much money in the house?"

"Money and worse."

"Could you not pay it into the banker's?"

"No, I daren't. I know too much. You would not be fool enough to talk of this?"

"Is it likely?" she said, smiling. "Will you say good-night?"

"Yes, I will say good-night. But mind, your treatment depends on your behavior. If you think you are forgiven, you will find yourself mistaken. I'll have obedience."

And so he went. And she began putting away the consumable portions of the banquet, that portion of the family supplies which, by a fiction current in such houses, the little servant is supposed habitually to pick and steal (their little servant would as lief have eaten molten lead). She had put away the cheese, the sugar, the whisky, and had locked the cupboard. She had got the ham, the loaf, and the lettuce on a tray, and was starting down stairs to lock them up in the larder away from the cat, who was all the time playing a game combined of cat's-cradle and puss-in-the-corner between her feet, mewing in a bland whisper, when she drove the tray into her father's chest, and brought him up short. "Ho!" he said. "Putting the things away. That's right."

The cat at once intertwined herself between his legs and amicably tripped him up.

"Bother the cat!" he exclaimed; "but she reminds me, though. I don't want to make it any duller than I can for you, Rebecca; only I will have order kept. You asked me last year if you might have a dog. And I said no."

"You did."

"I say yes now. You can have a dog, if it is a pleasure to you—"

"May I have a large one, or a little one?"

"Any size; but let him be a barker, a tearer, a dog that never sleeps. Silcox has got dogs that would tear the heart's life out of a man, if he bent his black brows at them, and the other day I saw his grandchildren playing at horses with them. Get a dog like that, if you can; but get a barker."

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW LIFE.

IN the whole history of insurrections I honestly believe that comparatively few are entirely unsuccessful. The position of the insurgent party is, in most instances, after a short time bettered. The fact is, one would fancy that no government is strong enough to stand many serious insurrections, and therefore, as soon as its stomach or its safety will allow, gives magnanimously what it would be dangerous to refuse to a high-spirited and well-organized minority—like Rebecca.

Her insurrection was not entirely without its fruits. If you come to consider, a daughter who has shown herself able and willing, under provocation, to absent herself promptly and secretly from home—making you look like a fool, and harassing you with inexorable terrors—is by no means a young lady to be trifled with. I once, in the range of my own personal experience, knew a young lady of tender years, in a certain school, who had the singular physical power of being very ill under the slightest contradiction; I mean ill as people are ill off the North Foreland. That child ruled the school, and learned just what she chose—which was nothing.

Turner was going to have no more escapades

in his house. If Rebecca had only known her power she might have done pretty much as she liked, but she did *not* know it. Her feeling was, that she had utterly overstepped natural bounds, and had been on the whole, for her father, kindly received home. Her feeling about her escapade was one of sheer terror, now that the old manner of life was all around her. It would take a still more dreadful provocation to make her take such a step again.

Women, trained for so many centuries to entire dependence, are not good at a long, steady defiance to association and habit. That they are capable of it, the whole world knows; but if it is forced on them the sustained effort which it costs them makes them coarse, fierce, and unwomanly. This continual effort of defiance will soon make, from habit, a woman's voice hoarse and manlike.

Rebecca happily escaped this. Her father had yielded, grudgingly, indeed, yet still had yielded; more than she had hoped for. Her condition was improved. The heretofore forbidden lane, with all its wonders, was at all events hers now. With fresh healthy vitality, with the curiosity toward the world and its ways of a child in the wood, this lane, with its swarming, dirty population, was as a deeply interesting book to her, which she was eager to read.

She was the first moving in the household on Monday morning: the intervening Sunday she had passed in bed. She roused the maid, and left the others sleeping. When they came down there was breakfast ready, the Bible set by his plate, her father's boots in their place, the newspaper warmed and ready for him, and his rasher of bacon hot in the fender. These facts, being taken by the allied powers as denoting contrition on her part, were received by her father in dumb silence, and by good Carry, who always trumped her father's trick, by a wondering sniff or two.

She did not care. She was to go into the lane, and have a dog of her own. Hagbut was a thing of the past; she would soon win these two over.

The portion of Scripture which Mr. Turner had to read that morning was rather unpropitious to his purpose of twisting a moral out of it to hurl at Rebecca's head. It was the journey of Jonah to Nineveh. He thought that he should have to leave her moral exertion to the prayer, when, stumbling on, he came to the fact that Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, exactly the time which Rebecca had been away. He emphasized this point so strongly, and paused so long, that Carry groaned, and the little maid—aroused suddenly from the orthodox religious coma, into which she always fell on the celebration of any form of worship, public or private—exclaimed, "Laws a mercy me!"

It was a great, though unforeseen, point or hit, this suggested parallel between Jonah and Rebecca; but Mr. Turner was too old a hand not to see that it would not hold water too far. Rebecca thought that he would have twisted it into the prayer; but he knew better. He started from an entirely new basis of operations. "It don't matter," said Rebecca; "I shall catch it somehow." And so, when her father said, "Let us pray," she knelt down, wondering how he was going to do it.

He led up to his theme in the most masterly manner. It was feebly like some Scotch ser-

mons, which one dimly remembers. You know the preacher's theme from his text, and you hear him go away into subjects apparently irrelevant, possibly three vague themes, which seem to have no relation to his text. You sit puzzled, and yet pleased, while he spins his first crude mass of yarn off into a single thread and leaves it. Then he spins you another heap of yarn into a thread; and leaving that, another; and then, taking his three threads, he spins them into a cord, which brings you back to his original proposition and his text. Then you take out your watch, and find that you have been sitting, with your intellect at its highest power, for one hour or so, and have thought it twenty minutes. A good Scotch sermon is not a thing to be despised. The Scotch are not considered to be devoid of brains, and they like them.

Turner's prayer had no similarity to a good Scotch sermon more than this. Rebecca knew that she would be his theme, and wondered how he would handle it. He handled it well enough for an Englishman. A Scotchman or a French preaching priest would have done it better; but it was creditable in a mere amateur.

Turner began by airing the old question of the permission of evil. The higher power doubtless knew best, he wished that there might be no mistake about *that*; but, at the same time, he, Turner, did beg and pray the First Cause to reconsider his opinions, and take to governing the universe more in accordance with his, Turner's, ideas than heretofore. He proceeded to offer a singular number of practical suggestions to the First Cause, which he hoped might be practically attended to on the first opportunity. And then he began to draw up to Rebecca, who knelt with her head on one side, wondering what he was going to say.

It was in the thanksgiving part of the prayer that he overthrew and demolished Rebecca, to her great admiration and wonder. She had begun to think that he was going to leave her alone altogether, for she was at a loss to understand how he could have any great thanksgiving to make on her account; but when he began to thank the First Cause for such afflictions as had been sent him, and also for the strength which had been given to him in bearing them, she saw how he was going to do it—and admired.

She wondered much at his ingenuity in attacking her under a form of thanksgiving to the Deity. She wondered still more at the ingenuity of the details; but what she admired most of all was the singular, self-complacent egotism which underlay his whole prayer, and which cropped up at every point. She knew of old her father's habit, common enough to men who live in a little world, of talking of himself to other men; but to hear him, while attacking her, point out his manifest excellences to the Deity, and then compare himself to a miserable worm, filled her with pure astonishment. She had never before seen how entirely her father was given to self-worship. Abraham's pleading was reasonable; her father's was utterly unreasonable. When he came to the ultimate point of summing up his utterly blameless life, and thanking Providence for afflicting him with an undutiful and rebellious daughter to keep him from the sin of self-glorification, she was pained and dazed. She wanted to love him; how could she when he

was so far from all else that she loved? Her father's religious exercise this morning had by no means a good effect on her. She was angry and sulky when she rose from her knees.

And she had meant to be so good. She left Carry to administer the little cares of domestic life which she, in the warmth of her heart, had prepared. She was silent and angry, and her father congratulated himself on having brought her to a sense of sin. He had brought her to a deep hatred of his form of religion.

She ate her breakfast in silence, but, keeping in mind the admissions of last night, saw that they must be kept before him. Toward the end of breakfast she said,

"I am to have a dog; and I am to walk up and down the lane; that is allowed. I wish that some arrangement might be come to under which I was not to be prayed at by pa before the maid, but that, I suppose, is hopeless. I can only say that, if it happens again, I shall rise from my knees and walk in the lane. I hate it."

"My dearest Rebecca!" said poor Carry.

"You may well say your dearest Rebecca, you two," said Rebecca, sullenly. "I meant to be as good as gold this morning, and submit, and be cheerful, and all that sort of thing. But I wish it understood that I will not be prayed at by pa, and thanksgivinged for by pa, or any one else. I may as well state my intentions at once. It is more than probable that very shortly I shall join the communion of the Primitive Methodists."

This was not quite such a dreadful threat to Mr. Turner as it was to Carry. Certainly, Mr. Turner reflected, the poor little Primitives were a low and poor sect, and the secession of one of the members of his household from a sect so rich as his, small though it was, a sect which nearly rivaled the National Church, would be as sad a thing as the secession of an ultra-evangelical in the National Church to Wesleyanism or the Baptists. Yet, after all, if she did go, it would be one way of accounting for her eccentricity. He put on his boots and went to business in tolerable humor. If she did not do worse than go to the Primitive Methodists, and if that abominably sleepy policeman would keep his eye on the house for a few months, matters would right themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD DUCETOY.

THE moment that Turner had shaken the dust of his own house off his feet, the little anxieties of that house were cast in the back-ground, and he was in another world. For, to tell the truth, at this very time Turner's religion, and Turner's domestic troubles, were actually swamped in another great matter—had become for a time, as it were, relaxations. The man was living two disconnected lives (unless Rebecca could connect them), and the least disagreeable was to him almost a relaxation. This great matter shall develop itself.

On Walham Green he caught the white Putney omnibus as usual; but not as usual did it drop him at the bottom of Chancery Lane. He got out at Arlington Street, Piccadilly, and made his way quickly to a private house in Duke Street, St. James.

"Is Lord Ducetoy up?" he asked of the quiet-looking servant in black who came to the door.

Lord Ducetoy was up, had finished breakfast, and was ready for Mr. Turner. He was shown up stairs into Lord Ducetoy's presence, and he looked on him with very great curiosity.

A handsome, well-made young man enough, light in hair, blonde in mustache, with the deep brown of the Western prairies still on his face; standing with his back against the chimney-piece, and lovingly wiping a gun with his handkerchief.

"How d'ye do, my dear Mr. Turner?" said Lord Ducetoy. "Thanks for coming so promptly, for I am in trouble."

"In trouble, my lord?" said Turner, very seriously. "Please tell me how."

"Well, it seems that I have not got any money."

"Your lordship has plenty of money. I can let your lordship have a thousand pounds at this moment."

"Then I wish you would. I wrote a check for a hundred pounds on my uncle, Sir Gorham Philpott, yesterday, and they have cashed it certainly. But they have written to me to say, as there is only £37 10s. in their hands, they request, either that more money may be paid in, or that our account may be closed."

"Oh, that is their move, is it?" said Mr. Turner.

"That is their move, my dear Mr. Turner," said Lord Ducetoy. "Rather a disagreeable one for me. You must know, as my uncle's old man of business, that I never expected to come into this earldom and this money. My uncle's death was utterly unexpected; my cousin's death at Madeira equally so. I was hammering about in Canada, trying to invest a certain thousand pounds I had so as to bring me in a living, when I suddenly found myself an earl, with a considerable income. Coming home, I find my check nearly dishonored, at my own uncle's, for one hundred pounds. I am a quiet fellow, but must live. I should be glad of some money."

"There is plenty of money," said Turner.

"I should like to see some of it," said Lord Ducetoy.

Turner sat musing and looking at Lord Ducetoy for some little time. At last he said:

"I suppose you know that your estates are rather heavily mortgaged?"

"I have heard as much."

"And that the mortgages are held by Sir Gorham Philpott & Co.?"

Lord Ducetoy had not heard that.

"Do you know that Sir Gorham Philpott & Co. are now Sir Gorham Philpott & Co., Limited?"

Lord Ducetoy laughed, and said "that he was not aware of the fact; but that their ideas of credit were certainly limited."

"They are, my lord," said Turner. "For limited liability is only another name for unlimited irresponsibility. Do you know nothing of the family jewels, of the family papers?"

"I know that there are great jewels, and cash, and papers. I suppose they are at the banker's."

"My lord, they are nothing of the kind. They are at my house. My lord, the limited bank, long really bankrupt, which has been trading un-

der the name, once respectable, of Sir Gorham Philpott, holds the mortgages on your estates, about the only asset they have. It has not seemed to me expedient to break with them, and bank with another house, lest they should inconveniently foreclose. But I have kept all out of their hands that I could. I, as executor under your uncle's will, have received the plate, the jewels, the deeds, under my own roof; and the responsibility of them is turning me gray."

"Could we not send them to Child's, or to Drummond's?"

"My lord, we owe Philpott's money—a great deal, I doubt."

"Can we pay it?"

"Yes, we can pay it. But their name is—and when the smash comes, we must take our chance with the others. I don't want our jewels and plate to be put into their bankruptcy."

"Then keep them where they are," said Lord Ducetoy. "I can trust you." And he whistled as he rubbed his gun, and said, laughing: "Well, I suppose now I have got money, I shall never be happy again. There is one thing I wish to say, in our prairie way, Mr. Turner. My mother says, that I can trust you through thick and thin; and so I mean to, for *she* never was wrong in her life. So if you find it possible, I should like to make our relations as friendly as possible. There is, by-the-way, a touch of New England in that, because I can't do without you. I don't mean that we are to rush into one another's arms, but if we try we may get friendly in time, I don't think it will take long." Here he got very red. "I only just remember my cousin. I hope to know her husband better. Will you dine with my mother and me to-day?"

Turner went up to him, and taking his hand, looked him frankly in the face, said, "Did she ask me?"

Lord Ducetoy nodded.

"Then tell her *No*. It is best all over and done with. Tell her also, that the trouble we thought past has begun again in my daughter. Good-by. You may trust me."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SKYE TERRIER.

REBECCA's good-humor came back the instant she was outside the garden and into the lane. She had tempted Carry to come, but Carry wouldn't. "You had better come," said Rebecca, "we shall have some amusement. I am going to Jim Akin about a dog, and it will be very pleasant." Carry would have liked to have gone very much, but she had said that she wouldn't in the first instance; and consistency, or, as some low people call it, obstinacy, is the brightest jewel in the British female's crown; so she declined to enjoy herself with her sister: and visited her self-imposed querulousness on the little maid.

Neither Jim Akin nor Mr. Spicer the sweep was out. With Akin it was always a slack day on Mondays, having worked Chelsea, principally Jews Row and Turks Row, with periwinkles, whelks, and shrimps the Sunday afternoon, and resting before going out to buy stock from the market gardeners. With Mr. Spicer also it was a "clean" day, few owners of houses of suffi-

cient respectability to require their chimneys swept by the hand of a master caring to make preparations for the sweep on Sunday night.

Very respectable Mr. Spicer looked in his off-duty clothes, comically unlike the hideous fiend-like figure he was when on duty. Rebecca had the advantage of the respectful counsel of these two excellent people on this occasion.

"If you please, Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer," she said, after the usual salutation, "I want to get a dog; pa is going to let me keep a dog."

They were both deeply interested at once. Mr. Akin, being professionally more accustomed to conversation, dashed into the subject at once.

"Warmint or general, Miss?"

"I don't quite understand," said Rebecca; and so Mr. Spicer, a sententious man, much looked up to in the Row, leaned against the fence and defined, after the Aristotelian method:

"A warmint dog, Miss, as his name implies, is a dog as is kept for the killing of warmint. Now there's a many kinds of 'em: bull-dog, bull terrier, fox terrier, black-and-tan terrier, toy, dandy, and Skye. Similarly there's varieties in the nature of warmint, as badger, pole-cat, weasel, and rat. Of badgers there is country badgers and old hands. Of pole-cats there is wild and tame. Of rats, why there's as much difference in rats, lor' bless you, as what there is in Christians. I've seen big rats as a new-born kitten could kill; and contrariwise, one of my young men went to enter a well-bred year-old toy with an old rat, and I am blessed if the dog didn't cut and run for his life, howling round the lanes, and the rat after him."

"I seen it," said Jim Akin.

"But I don't want a dog to kill any thing," said Rebecca.

"Miss wants a general dog, I expect, miller," said Jim Akin, to the master chimney-sweep. "Tip her some of your advice now."

"General dogs, Miss," said the miller, complacently, "is, like warmint dogs, various; and I never seen none that was much count, takin' into consideration what dogs was made for. Still Providence made 'em, and the fancy gives prizes for 'em, similarly as they do for fantails and pouters, and other rubbish that were only created for showing and dealing. If I had my will, Miss, there should be no prizes for any pigeons except carriers, and none for any dogs except real warmint."

"Greyhounds," murmured Jim Akin.

"And you may add pointers and setters," said Mr. Spicer; "but they're gentry dogs. When you are a gentleman with a moor in the 'lands, talk about 'em; not now."

"Miss wouldn't want a fighting dog?" suggested Jim Akin, accepting the rebuke.

"Do she look like it, neighbor?" said Mr. Spicer, almost severely.

"A fighting dog ain't half a bad thing to mind a young lady, if she wanted to go a walking far by herself," said Jim Akin, not to be entirely driven from this point.

Mr. Spicer was very fond of his neighbor, but he had to ignore him, he was getting low.

"With regard to general dogs, Miss, which were your views?"

"Well," said Rebecca, "I should like a dog which would bark if it heard a noise, and a dog I should be fond of. I think I should like a lit-

tle dog the best. I think I should like a little hairy dog, like the Queen's in the picture, you know, which is begging to the Macaw for its biscuit; if it did not cost too much."

I know nothing of the private life of Mr. Spicer or Mr. Akin; when I am thrown against gentlemen in that particular circle of society, I ask few questions. If any of ourselves had no education, and associated with, bought and sold with, ay, and intermarried with the criminal classes, should we look on the lighter crimes with the same detestation we do now? A man whose wife's brother has been transported, and yet who gets treated as a respectable and trust-worthy person by the district inspector, seems to me to be in his way meritorious. If a little stray dog follows him home, or if a strange pigeon come into his trap, why, he is possibly not so chivalrously particular as you or I should be; when you get to the very verge of the criminal class you must make allowances.

Jim Akin and Mr. Spicer interchanged a glance, and then Jim Akin spoke. "I have got a little dog in my back-yard, Miss, which you might care to look at."

"Undeniable character," said Mr. Spicer. "Never 'tized, but character un-de-niable, against all the Pleece in creation."

Rebecca assented at once, and they went in through Jim Akin's close-smelling house, which had a mingled scent of washing, dirt, children, cabbage-stalks, baby, and cheese; and out into the little back-yard, separated from the neighbors' back-yards by a low, broken paling. There was no vegetation in it, except, at the farther corner, an elder-tree. And at the foot of the elder-tree there was an American flour-barrel, and at the entrance of the flour-barrel sat a little, tiny, innocent dog, chained up, and looking very unhappy.

It was a very beautiful little Skye terrier, a dog worth money, but grimed with ashes and soot, unkempt, unwashed, utterly and entirely miserable and woe-gone. It was a dog which had been cared for, and loved, and tended in its time, so carefully tended, that it had lost its instinct of self-care, and had lost its mistress, or let itself be stolen, and had come to this. It cowered when it saw Jim Akin and Mr. Spicer; but when it saw a lady with them it looked up at her with its light hazel eyes, and held up its poor innocent little paw.

Her father might well call her a fool. I suppose she was a fool according to his light. Her heart seemed to swell suddenly within her, and her eyes not all unready for tears, for the little dog, out of its misery, had appealed to her as Friday did to Crusoe. She went straight to the barrel, undid the dog, and took it to her bosom.

"I will buy this dog of you, Mr. Akin," she said, without turning round. "My father will pay for it. Send in a moderate price to him, or he will not let me have it. I will pay the difference. I will have this dog."

"Will you let me give you the little dog?" said a voice, close at her elbow.

She turned quickly round. It was Mr. Morley, the dissenting minister, who stood close beside her.

CHAPTER X.

MR. MORLEY.

Nobody likes to be caught suddenly in a sentimental mood. Every true-born Briton hates it almost as much as he hates being caught in (respectable) sin. Rebecca had just been caught in a sentimental mood over a grimy Skye terrier, in company with a chimney-sweep and a costermonger, by a dissenting minister. In the revulsion brought on by a nearly strange face, the situation, instead of being really beautiful, as it was one minute ago, was in the highest degree ridiculous—as she thought.

"How did you come here, Mr. Morley?" she asked. "I am surprised."

"I came to see you, and I saw you come in here, and I followed you."

"I am much obliged. My father's house is over the way. I think you asked me if you might pay for this dog? My answer is, No."

"There ain't nothing to pay," said Jim Akin. "Miss has took a fancy to the dog, and she is welcome to her."

"Do you mean to say that you will give me the dog as a present?"

"Certainly, Miss; and will swear to her agin all Christendom."

"I'll take it, Jim Akin," she said. "And I'll never pay one farthing for it, except in good-will. If I don't pay you in cash, I will pay you in kind. Let me give you one more chance—I will give you a five-pound note for this dog; I will go across the street and get it now."

"Won't take it, Miss. I'll take it out in good-will. The mistake as you gentry makes," continued Jim Akin, speaking sententiously, and looking at Mr. Morley, who certainly looked like a gentleman, "is this: You thinks we're for cash, and all cash; and it ain't so. *I've* got as much money as I want. You gentlemen as studies has got good words. Why can't you give us some of your good words now and again, in a friendly way, the same as I give she the little dog?"

"Well," said Rebecca, turning homeward with her new treasure in her arms, "all I can say is, that you shall always have good words from me; and so good-by. Mr. Morley, I have just been so cross with you. I am afraid you must think me very silly."

"On what grounds?"

"On the grounds of being very nearly crying for pity over a poor lonely little dog. If your life were as lonely as mine—"

"What then?" said Mr. Morley, as they crossed the street.

"Why then, I fancy, I may be wrong, but I do fancy that you are the sort of person who would be just as likely to make a goose of yourself over such a matter as me."

"That is not grammar, you know, as it stands," said Mr. Morley.

"Then let it be grammar as it sits," said Rebecca. "You know what I mean."

"I am afraid I do; and what is more and worse, I am afraid it is true."

"Then you *do* sometimes make a goose of yourself?"

"Have I not come to see you?"

"That is true enough. Talking of geese, what is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning water-fowl?"

"That a minister of the gospel had better mind his own business, and not come to visit houses where common stage-plays are read habitually."

"Only one single number of *Knight's Illustrated*; I give you my honor," said Rebecca. "You have read it, you know; at least, you seem pretty familiar with it. Did you really come to see me?"

"I did, indeed."

"I have leave to walk up and down the lane. Will you walk with me?"

Mr. Morley consented gladly.

"I want to talk to you very much, but about very many things. You seem to have had an education different to—to the men I have seen here. For instance, you know Shakespeare?"

"I know Shakespeare very well."

"I know nothing of him but this one play. And that is so wonderful—so utterly unlike, both in thought and diction, to any thing I have ever seen before, that I can nearly say it by heart. Are the other plays to be compared in goodness to this one?"

"Certainly. In perfect dexterity and elegance, I rank *Twelfth Night* as high as any; but for no other qualities. *Hamlet* is the finest of them all."

"And what is that about?"

"The old Calvinist business—the business without beginning and without end—which keeps so many preachers on their legs, for the simple reason that, let them turn it inside out as often as they will, there is no answer to it. *Hamlet*, with its beautiful language and deep thought, runs mainly on predestination, the permission of evil, and the responsibility in this world and in the next of bad or careless actions, committed, as it would seem, almost unavoidably."

"And how does Shakespeare get us out of the old difficulty, familiar enough to me, I am sure?" asked Rebecca.

"The characters all stab and poison one another," said Mr. Morley.

"Mark my words, Mr. Morley," said Rebecca, stopping short, and stroking the head of her little dog, who, under the impression that it had only been stolen once more in a different sort of way, was low in its little mind; "mark my words, Mr. Morley, that Shakespeare was a man not entirely deprived of understanding. I am aware that you people hate him, curse him from your pulpits, and so on. But there is something in the man."

"I never cursed him," said Morley. "I love him."

"You!" said Rebecca. "I never sat under you. The man whom you call your brother—the man whose opinions you are bound to indorse does, though. I mean the man Hagbut, for I have heard him."

sit here, do you see, and you sit there. Now, will you please begin and get it over."

"Can you suppose that I mean to scold you?" he said.

"I suppose that you have come commissioned by my father to see after my spiritual state," she replied. "Are you not Mr. Hagbut's successor? If so, I am afraid that you will have a thankless task."

"I assure you, on my honor," he said, eagerly, "that my visit is solely and entirely to you; that I dislike Mr. Hagbut; that I have no commission from your father whatever. May I go on? I am much older than you, and, God knows, I wish you well."

"If you put matters on those friendly grounds, I am sure that you may say what you like. If you intend to be truly my friend in a worldly point of view, I can meet you half-way, for I am sure I want one badly."

"We will sign no compact of friendship," he answered; "but you shall try me. I am an old widower of forty-two, and have a daughter nearly as old as you."

"A daughter!" said Rebecca. "I never heard of that before."

She blushed scarlet as she said it, for she betrayed the fact that he was interesting to her, and that she had inquired about him.

"Yes, I have a daughter," said Morley, stroking his chin. "Yes; quite so. Hetty (that is short for Hephzibah, not for Esther; you will understand) is nearly as old as you are, I should say."

"I suppose she is very fond of you?" said Rebecca, still in confusion.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Morley, still stroking his chin. "Hetty is very fond of me indeed. But I will show you how much I am inclined to put confidence in you, Miss Turner, by telling you that my dear daughter is not a popular person."

"Is she cross?" asked Rebecca.

"No, she's not cross. When I say that she is unpopular, I mean that she is unpopular among our religious connection, and—well—is a great stumbling-block with them."

"She seems to be very much in my condition, then," said Rebecca.

"Very much indeed," said Mr. Morley, the truth being far too great to be kept back.

"Very much so."

"Did she ever run away and hide for three days, as I did?" said Rebecca.

Mr. Morley did not answer in speech at all, neither did he look at Rebecca at all. He only looked at space, with a compound expression in which there was, simply in a very slight movement of the mouth, a touch of humor, but no anger or sorrow. Rebecca began to have an intense desire to know the young lady, and said so.

"She would be highly flattered, I am sure," said Mr. Morley, "if I told her so; but I shall not do it, however. By-the-by, may I presume to be sufficiently in your confidence to ask a favor?"

"Provided it is not a guilty secret, of course," said Rebecca.

"But it is," said Mr. Morley. "Don't say any thing about my daughter up here. This part of our connection does not know any thing

CHAPTER XI.

HETTY'S LOVER.

"It is not so pleasant in here as in the lane," said Rebecca, leading the way in to their dull, narrow-windowed sitting-room. "This is the place where I am scolded and admonished. I

about her. Even Hagbut keeps the dreadful secret, knowing that if any thing of her ways was known here, Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper would at once find out or invent quite enough about her to make me perfectly useless as a minister to this congregation, when he wanted my services, as he pretty often does. Besides, the girl is a connection of his. You will not mention her?"

"I will not, indeed," said Rebecca, pleased very much at being taken into any one's confidence and treated like a woman. "I am sure she is good."

"There is good in her somewhere," replied Morley, slightly showing his white teeth; "you will keep my secret, then, from your Russel and Soper; now let us talk of other matters. Your father looks very ill and worn."

"I have been behaving very ill, and have given him trouble. I ran away for three days to avoid doing something he had set his heart on my doing. I am very truly penitent for having given him anxiety, but I would do it again to-morrow; and so would your daughter."

"People don't run away from me," said Mr. Morley; "they are more apt to come after me, I think. While I have been sitting here, and looking out of the window, I have noticed one; he has found the house at last; he rings the bell; he asks for me; yes, and here your little maid shows him in."

And into the room came a magnificent young sailor, with the fresh, wild vitality of the sea shining in his bold brown eyes, showing in his noble free gait and bright free smile. A splendid apparition just risen from the ocean, in his ocean's garb; such a youth as Rebecca had never seen before. As one looked at him with traveled eyes, there came on one dim memories of peaceful seas among soft blue islands far away; of angry, cruel icebergs; of wild, horrible, staggering nights when ruin was abroad, and death looked with pale face over the steersman's shoulder at the dim-lit reeling binnacle. A youth who had looked steadily on death often, and would look again and yet again without terror, and die at the last fighting fiercely. Still young, handsome, and gentle.

The old narrow-windowed parlor seemed the darker and the dingier for his presence. With the exception of Rebecca herself, there had been nothing there so splendid for many years. Rebecca had never seen any thing like this; she had seen youth and vitality before, in Jim Akin and the like, but never any thing like this young man. She looked at him with keen curiosity and admiration; and Mr. Morley watched her.

"I have run you to earth, Sir," said the young sailor, who, by his dress, seemed of the superior mate class. "Hetty told me that you would be here."

"Chapter of accidents," said Mr. Morley. "What business was it of Hetty's, or of yours?"

"Hetty said that you were to come home to dinner; and, indeed, we want you."

"You want me a great deal, I have no doubt," said Mr. Morley.

"Indeed, we do want you very much," said the young sailor; "in fact, Hetty would not let me into the house until you come. She only—"

"Never mind that, Sir."

"Well, I won't," he said, laughing; "but

you know that she will not take her pleasure without your sharing it. And if Miss Turner," he added, with a bright smile, "will spare you to us this one evening, we will try to make amends in future. May I be introduced to Miss Turner?"

"This, Miss Turner," said Mr. Morley, "is young Leonard Hartop. He is of the salt-water persuasion. The remarkable fact about him is, that he never sails in any kind of ship but what that ship meets with a very serious accident. Likewise, on the occasion of these accidents, some one else is always on the watch. I introduce him."

"I am delighted, I am sure," said Leonard Hartop, "to make Miss Turner's acquaintance. In what you may be allowed to call, on an occasion of this kind, the flowering vale of tears, there is little doubt that our acquaintance will be improved to mutual satisfaction. For you must not believe *him* about me, Miss Turner. His bark is worse than his bite. Nobody cares twopence-half-penny for him. Now, Mr. Morley, are you coming home to dinner?"

"Wait for me at the lane's end, boy, and I will come," said Mr. Morley; and the young sailor bowed and departed.

"What do you think of him?" he said to Rebecca, when he had gone.

"He is very splendid," said Rebecca, dreamily.

"I have never seen any one like him."

"He is a splendid sailor," said Morley. "May I tell you a secret which would ruin us all if it was known?"

"There would be a little excitement about it," said Rebecca; "I think you had better tell me."

"Well, then, I will trust you. He is Hetty's lover."

"She must have good taste, then. I should not entirely break my heart if he was mine."

"No?" said Mr. Morley.

"Well, I don't know," said Rebecca. "That young man and I should never hit it off, you know. He seems as if he liked his own way."

"The most biddable lad going," said Mr. Morley.

"Then he wouldn't suit me. Hetty may have him. I want ordering about; I can't take care of myself. But, speaking to you as a minister, or, as the Papists call it, a father confessor, Mr. Morley, I confess to you that I could, with very small effort, have fallen in love with that young man. If Hetty has got him, let her keep him. I shall know Hetty one day, I see. For the present I have made my arrangements for marriage."

"I dare not ask what arrangements."

"I will save your cowardice, then; I have, for my own purposes, made it impossible for any man to marry me; and I am going to marry old Tibbey."

"Tibbey, the Primitive Methodist, in Leader Street? He is married already."

"Not him, but his wife. —I am going to marry her. At all events, I am going to get out of this house in some way. I would to Heaven that I could turn Roman Catholic. *They* find a life and a business for women like me. If I could swallow their miserable superstitions I could join them to-morrow. Why do not you extreme Protestants make provision for women who are willing to devote their lives to God and to the

poor, as do the Papists? You cry out at the Papists getting so many converts among women; what is the real reason? These Papists, with a false, low, and I hope moribund, form of Christianity, are the only sect which offers a career to an ordinary and ill-educated woman. Whose fault is it that we are ill-educated? You have refused us education, and we are as clever as you. You teach us to play the piano. The Papists show us a suffering Christ through suffering humanity. They find a sphere for a woman—"

"Which you would occupy for possibly a week."

CHAPTER XII.

HAGBUT'S NEW INTENTIONS.

SHE saw no more of her two new acquaintances for nearly a fortnight, and the old life came back again with almost the old misery and dullness. Yet Rebecca was never exactly as she had been any more. She was more desperately unhappy—that I do not disguise—but her unhappiness now was of a different kind. It was active. Her old unhappiness was as that of one imprisoned in a living tomb from her birth, hopeless, and without any room for fancy, which is one of the greatest mitigators of human ills. She was very miserable again now, but only because dreams, now become possible to her, seemed unattainable. Before this she had no dreams at all: her life was merely a painful sleep. And now, also, she had a companion and a confidant, her little dog.

The man who has never known a woman who will confide to a baby or a dog matters which she would not confide to an intelligent being, must be unfortunate in his experiences. Poor Rebecca told her little Skye terrier a great many things about herself, in which she scarcely believed as to herself, and which she would have denied with the extremest scorn to any person in the world, unless possibly in deep distress to old Mrs. Tibbey.

She had broken all bounds for the first time in her life. In her desperation regarding her marriage to Mr. Hagbut, she had been forced into arms; into a thoroughly successful revolution. True, she had in her weariness come back, as it were, to Caesarism; but it rests with the politicians to tell us whether the individual or the nation ever gets back into its old frame of mind again after one good taste of liberty. What has been done once may be done twice. The ruler of a once thoroughly revolutionized kingdom sits uneasy on his throne; and what is more to the purpose, the subject knows it. At least Rebecca did. And so now, when the house was duller, and her father most disagreeable, instead of "wishing she was dead," or declaring that she would marry a coster-monger if he would only take her out of this, used milder formulas; only told her little dog that he would drive her to it again, he would: and that Mab and she and Mrs. Tibbey would go to Ramsgate, and stay there altogether next time; and live on shrimps, and keep a nice little oyster shop, and never go to chapel any more. And if that nasty tiresome Hetty was near, Mab should bark at her.

This babyish nonsense was very good for her.

She had had too little of it in her childhood; books like Hans Andersen's had never been seen in that house. It was well for her that she had still child enough left in her after her embittered life only to talk to her little innocent dog in a petulant childish way about Hetty; for she might have talked in a very different one a little time before. Yet one thing she told her dog now, but which she never confessed to herself, was that she hated Hetty.

Hetty the unknown, Hetty the innocent. It was surely unreasonable.

It would be merely confusion of counsel to try and account for it as she did. That Hetty was free; that she could come and go; that she had a father who loved her; and was not watched by two pernicious old trots (meaning Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper); she did not believe in all that herself. Hetty was welcome to all that. She had been inclined to admire Hetty, until Mr. Morley, for reasons of his own, had told her that the young sailor Hartop was her lover.

She had not cared at the time; if he and Hetty had come arm in arm, the next day, and made love before her, she would not have cared much, more particularly if Mr. Morley had come too. But this grand young sailor had left his image on a late awakened and fully developed mind, and it would not go. He was the first really splendid man she had ever seen.

And he had appeared, only to draw her only friend, Mr. Morley, away from her. They had left her at once, to go after this Hetty, and all their schemes, and goings on down at Limehouse, the gate of freedom: for you might get on board a ship in Limehouse, and you might sail away any where—to the happy islands in the Western Sea, where there was no chapel-going, or tea-meeting, or Sunday-school, all of which Mr. Morley wished to establish there; or even further, to those islands where you could do as you pleased, and escape the consequences of your own actions; in which islands Mr. Morley did not believe. (This was, of course, only said to the little dog.) But even to her sister, Carry, she grumbled, after a few days. She told her that she thought Mr. Morley had whisked himself off with his young friend rather unceremoniously.

"I am glad to hear he has been here," said Carry.

"Yes; he came to see me. And I should like him to come again. But the young sailor, to whom his daughter is engaged, came and carried him off."

"Mr. Morley has no daughter," said Carry.

"Indeed, but he has thought," said Rebecca. "And I wish he hadn't."

"Dearest Rebecca," said Caroline, with just such tact as she had gathered from her station, and her school, "believe a tender sister, when she tells you that Mr. Morley has no family."

"But I tell you he has. Hetty was alive a week ago; bother her."

"You are in a perfect dream, my dear sister," said Carry. "Mr. Morley is perfectly unencumbered, and his prospects are, in a pecuniary point of view, very good indeed. I give you my honor he has no daughter. I tell you, you have been dreaming."

"That is true enough," said Rebecca. "I have been dreaming a deal too much. But who told you he had no daughter?"

"Mr. Hagbut, to-night, at Miss Soper's."

"How did he come to say it there?" said Rebecca, who was beginning to get a little uneasy about this mysterious Hetty's legal relation to Mr. Morley.

Carry was a certain kind of British woman, who when she saw occasion would walk clean through half a dozen quickset hedges, without, as vulgar people say, winking her eye. She did so on this occasion, as on many others.

"The fact of the matter is, my dear Rebecca, that Mr. Hagbut has announced his intention to several mutual friends, of paying his addresses to me. He has not committed himself to me in any way as yet; he has not sufficiently studied my character. But he has said, with a view of my hearing it at second-hand, that if I should be found worthy of his great position, and if he sees hopes of forming my character to his standard, he will overlook the disgrace which one member of our family has brought on it; and—"

"He is rapid in his determinations," said Rebecca, quietly.

"He is very determined. He is a man to be obeyed. But this is a little past the matter. His opinion is that Mr. Morley is very much inclined to marry you, in spite of all that has happened."

"Yes," said Rebecca, very quietly.

"Indeed he thinks so," said Carry; "and we all rejoiced with a great joy. I consider, that if you are careful, such a thing might be. And in the course of conversation I asked if he had any family; and he said that there was a daughter, but that she was dead."

"He meant dead in trespasses and sins, you know," said Rebecca.

"He said dead," said Carry. "Now you know the whole truth, my dear."

Burning lava over boiling water makes a good explosion, as geologists tell us. There were all the elements of it in Rebecca's heart. She could have killed them all with burning words. For them to *dare*, after her resolution, to buy and sell her like this. The way in which the crust of respectability forms quickly over the lava of revolution is what drives some men, who will not look to the great cyclical advance of matters, mad. And really, Charles the Second and Dryden, as successors and apparently results of Cromwell and Milton, is a bitter pill for a Whig. Men, maddened with this view of things, try to assassinate innocent sovereigns. Can we wonder that Rebecca felt a strong inclination to box her sister's ears?

Only for one moment. She was a clear-hearted woman, with all her faults. She saw her own sister before her, and all her little petty woes and wrongs were forgotten. Easily forgotten, for she had freed herself. Instead of giving way to ill-temper, she gave way to good; and, kneeling before her sister, said:

"Carry, sister! we have always been good friends. In Heaven's name have nothing to do with that man. Are you forced? I was forced; but I beat them, the mean tattlers and time-servers. Do as I did if you hate it. Come away as I did, sister; and see what the world is out of this miserable lane. I will never leave you, dear; no more will Elizabeth Tibbey; no more will Mab. Fly from it, dear, with me. We could keep a little shop, or any thing: Mr. Tib-

bey would tell us. Or we would go to Mr. Morley, and he would tell us what to do. But oh, that man, Carry! There is time to save yourself; in Heaven's name think what you are doing."

Rebecca's wild appeal failed absolutely. Carry's mind was too well formed. Rebecca's appeal to her, beautiful in its affectionate unselfishness, if in nothing else, was to her hideous and amorphous—shapeless to her: her sister was a woman with a wild, ill-regulated mind: an object of pity. Yet, in her reply, she unconsciously allowed that there was reason in Rebecca's wild plea to her; for, instead of showing pity, she showed resentment. And Rebecca had so nearly won, that this resentment took the form of anger: anger expressed as she had heard it expressed in her family, a little coarsely.

"You fool, get up, and don't kneel to me; kneel to your Maker. You are the plague of our lives. When I am married to him you will always be held over my head like a whip. The old business was just hushed up, when you must break out. Get up."

She got up at once, but she smiled kindly, too. "You will be sorry for these words, Carry, dear, long after I have forgotten them."

"I know I shall, you wicked thing!" said Carry, sobbing bitterly. "Why did you tempt me to say them?"

"Because I did not like to see one I love marry a man utterly beneath her, and utterly unworthy of her."

Whereupon, poor old Carry gathered up her skirts, and walked through another quickset hedge, consisting of Mr. Hagbut's virtues, through which we will not follow her.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRANK EXPLANATION.

WHEN the sisters had parted Rebecca was very angry again. For them to have dared to use her name like this once more. "Still the question arises," she said, "is it not all their own inconceivable folly? Mr. Morley is far too much of a gentleman to have spoken to any of *them*, at all events, before he spoke to me. He is inclined to like me, and I am fond enough of him; but he does not admire me."

Her father came in, and without looking at him, she said: "Has Mr. Morley spoken to you about any intentions of his with regard to me, Sir?"

"Certainly not!" said her father. "Do you mean matrimonial intentions? Why, you have scarcely seen him; and if Morley had any such intentions, he, with his breeding, would most surely have made himself safe with you in the first instance. Tell us the story, Rebecca; do not let us mistake one another again. Has he shown you any attentions?"

"None whatever, except those of an interested friend. He has been very kind to me."

"Then how has this report come about?" asked her father. And Rebecca simply told him what Carry had told her.

"So you see," she added, "that my name is the common talk of Miss Soper's tea-table in connection with his."

"What an abominable shame! *Who* said it?"

"Mr. Hagbut."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Turner. "Yes, yes! quite so. My dear daughter, I have reason to believe *now* that Mr. Morley does really more or less admire you, and that Mr. Hagbut has remarked it."

"Am I never to be let alone?" cried Rebecca.

"Do not interrupt; listen—open your eyes. I have reason now to believe that Hagbut at least suspects that, in course of time, Mr. Morley may come to admire you, and that he has, knowing your proud and uncontrollable temper, put this report about in such a way as may set you utterly against Mr. Morley."

"What on earth is it to him?" said Rebecca.

"Between five and six thousand pounds, my dear. If you marry so well as Morley—marry, in fact, a gentleman of respectability and strength of character, like him—you will have the same fortune as your sister. If you remain single at my death, you will have one hundred a year; if you make a foolish match, you will have eighteen shillings a week, tied up to you, and payable weekly. Hagbut thinks that if he can in any way get rid of this match, he will net certainly five, and possibly seven thousand pounds."

"He is a villain," said Rebecca, with singular emphasis; "and I always told you so."

"This is rather sharp practice, certainly," said Mr. Turner. "Now, I may have made such sharp practice, or I may not. I can't say. I meet and am friendly with men who would do such things, and I am never angry with them. But I am angry now. For him to put his pudding brains against mine! Oh, Master Hagbut, the Pope shall be the richer for that odd money sooner than you. For him to come lawyer. And over me!"

"Why is my sister to be sacrificed to such a wretch?"

"He is a wretch. She will lick his feet, and he will let her, and be kind to her. It is the same between priests and women in all churches. I myself would lick the dust of the shoes of any man who could assure me of heaven—still more will a frightened and ignorant woman. He will be very kind to her, and she will adore him. Have you been saying any thing to her against him?"

"I fear a great deal," said Rebecca, in downright honesty, expecting an outburst.

"Do not do so again, my dear Rebecca. Nothing can prevent their being husband and wife, and so sow no seeds of discord. Remember that, child. This has not been a happy house; do not use your power to make another such."

What between her father's kindness, and her ideal future of poor Carry, it was through tears that she promised that she would not.

"Do you like Mr. Morley?" he asked.

"Yes, very much indeed. But I could never think of marrying him."

"Don't let us deceive one another, Rebecca. Is there any one else?"

"No," she said at once. Who could there be? She was not allowed to go out of the lane, and never saw any one. But she said it with so poor an air that her father looked suspiciously at her, and said:

"Well, my girl, we had a great fight, and you won. Perhaps I am older and wiser than when I knew your mother. At all events, if I made

errors with her I do not wish to repeat them with you. I have told you how you will be situated as regards money-matters. Further than that, no more constraint shall be put upon you than is now. Do you understand?"

"I am thankful."

"Keep your ears open and your attention awake, and never repeat what I am going to tell you. When you brought disgrace on this house as you did, that fellow Hagbut came to me to break off his engagement with you, as he was almost bound to do. But the way he did it showed me he was a rascal and a sneak, every inch of him. By Heaven! he little knew how near he was being pitched into the lane."

"And yet poor Carry—" began Rebecca.

"Hold your tongue! you have enough to do without minding Carry. Mind yourself, and listen to me. You say there is no one has your heart; I ask no further. But mind, if there were, and Hagbut knew it, he will, if he is likely to be entirely displeasing to me, throw him against you."

Rebecca sat perfectly silent, and her father saw that there was more than he cared to know. At last she said, "Please, father, has Mr. Morley a daughter?"

"He may have a dozen for aught I know. I only know his eminent character; I know nothing of his domestic life, except that he is a widower."

"Because he told me he had, and told me much about her. And Hagbut denies that there is any such daughter."

"Hagbut is probably overreaching himself in some way," said Mr. Turner, coolly. "Suppose, for an instance, that Morley had a daughter who had done him discredit, such as yourself, you know, he might possibly be scheming to keep her as long as possible in the back-ground, and make anger between you and Morley. In which, you see, he has already failed, for Morley has told you all about her. Mind, once more, in conclusion; if there is any man of whom I should disapprove in this case, Hagbut *thinks* he wins £8000 by your marrying him, and he will contrive that you should meet him. And so, good-night."

CHAPTER XIV.

HARTOP.

MAB, the little dog, used to bark furiously at strangers in general, and regarded both Carry and Mr. Turner in that light. So, when, two days after the last conversation, Rebecca was told that there was a gentleman to see her, Mab barked all the way down stairs, but on getting to the sitting-room door began to whine and scratch joyously, so that Rebecca thought it was Mr. Morley.

But it was not; it was only the magnificent young sailor, Hartop. She was sorry that he had come; and, without perceiving her cold reserved air, he came frankly and joyously up to her, and took her hand.

"I could not get to you a moment before; I have been unloading all the day long, ever since we were in port till to-day. My uncle, Mr. Hagbut, suggested to me that it would be only kind if I were to come and tell you about those two."

Her father's words came on her with a shock. This, then, was the man selected by Mr. Hagbut as the one most likely to make mischief between her and her father. The man of all others the most dangerous.

"Yet how could he have known *that*?" It was indeed a puzzle, if it were not an accident. All this went through her mind so quickly that she did not keep him waiting for his answer. She said, promptly, "What two?"

"Why Mr. Morley and Hetty, to be sure," he replied, wondering.

"Then there is a Hetty?" said Rebecca, with animation.

"There was three days ago," he said, laughing; "and I think you will find a young person of her appearance, and claiming her name, walking about with her father in the Boopjes of Rotterdam this afternoon."

"She is a good sailor, I dare say," said Rebecca.

"It would be a queer thing for her if she wasn't," said Hartop, with another look of wonder. "But I didn't come here to talk about *her*; I should talk all the afternoon if I began about *her*. Do allow me to assure you that of all the pretty, innocent, little birds that fly over the tropic sea, she is the prettiest and most innocent; and of all the brave hearts which beat truest and most steady in the worst gale that ever blew, hers is the truest and steadiest. They will set you against her, but don't believe them."

"Why should they set me against her?" asked Rebecca.

"She broke through rules, you know," said he, seriously. "If she and I had been what we are now, I should most likely have been against it. But that was afterward. We won't talk of her; you shall judge her for yourself. Now I want to ask you to walk with me. Do come. It is the only civility I can show you."

"I will go and ask my father," she said, and so left him.

Mr. Turner was sitting alone in his bedroom, brooding in his chair, and hearing some one coming, caught up his Bible and bent his head over it: a fact made patent to Rebecca by seeing that he held it upside down.

"Father," she said, quietly, as soon as she had shut the door, "the young man you warned me of has come from Mr. Hagbut; and I have come to ask your leave to go out to walk with him for an hour or so."

"No!" cried Mr. Turner, shutting up his Bible. "Why, this is as good as a play. Tell me all about it. Who is he?"

"He is young Hartop, a sailor; Mr. Hagbut's nephew."

"Hagbut knows something against him, then, or—stay, let us condemn no man—he has calculated on my having objections to your marrying a sailor; that is it. Now, my girl, let us have it all out; there is more to come. I have not watched witnesses' eyes for nothing all my life."

"You remember that Mr. Hagbut denied that Mr. Morley had a daughter."

"Certainly."

"Well, he has such a daughter, and her name is Hetty; and this young man is engaged to be married to her. And he describes her as the most perfect being ever seen. I don't know how I know it, but I do know this—if any thing were

to come between this splendid Hetty and himself he would be a lost man."

"Then you see my theory of her being disreputable, and of Hagbut's keeping her in the background to make a quarrel on the score of want of confidence between you and Morley, falls to the ground. I was under the impression that, if there were such a girl, Hagbut would advise Morley to keep her in the back-ground until you were well committed to him, and then reveal her disreputable existence by means of one of those savory old catamarans—vessels, I mean. But this theory falls to the ground now, if she is what the young man says she is. She can not have done any thing."

"She has done *something*, though, and something rather strong. Her own father hinted it to me, and her own devoted lover confirmed it. I don't want to know what it is, but the young man who is to marry her hoped just now that the good ladies, whom you so well describe as savory catamarans, would not prejudice me against her. He says she has broken through rules."

"I wish I could," said poor Mr. Turner; "but I am too old. Go on, Rebecca, we have had less than half at present. You have never got together evidence yet, my good girl, and so you can't tell by a witness's eyes whether the story is all told."

Rebecca laughed, and, for the first time in her life, sat down by her father's knee, and leaned her head against it.

"You are right," she went on. "Do you remember that you said—well, if there was any young man, with whom I was in danger, who was disagreeable to you, that Hagbut would throw him against me. He has done so."

"Is there danger with this young man, then? Where could you have seen him?"

"In your own house; here, in the presence of Mr. Morley. And there *was* danger about him. And I want to go out a-walking with him. And you are going to let me."

"Then there is no danger now?"

"Not a bit," said Rebecca. "He has blown all my fancies to the winds in ten minutes by his clear manly frankness, just as I created them in ten minutes for myself. No danger at all."

"That is well," said Mr. Turner, noticing that, now his hand was very near his daughter's beautiful hair, there was a strange pleasure in passing his hand through it. "But have you ever been indiscreet about this young man: to Carry, for instance?"

"I could not tell Carry what I had never confessed to myself," said Rebecca. "Yet it would seem as if the man had second-sight."

"Carry possibly gave him some hint."

"But she could not have done so, father. She never heard of him in her life."

"Then I will tell you what it is, my child. It is only an old dodge of priestcraft, which is now called Jesuitism; as if a real Jesuit would have made such a risk. He sent him here on a chance of confusing counsel, finding himself possible to make the most likely hash of matters, and pick his own interest out—that is all; but Mr. Morley has put you on your guard. Nothing more than that." And, indeed, there was nothing more; for Hagbut was quite as much fool as knave.

"Well, he has failed," said Mr. Turner. "Where is the young man? Let us see him."

Rebecca, rising, reminded her father that the young man had been waiting down stairs above half an hour; and they went to see him.

The young man, splendid as he was in beauty and stature, accustomed to bully all sailors and officials in every part of the globe, was terribly frightened at this dry old English attorney. He and Jack Hord (of Wilmington, U. S.; the New York branch of the family, lately enriched, call themselves Howard) had with their stretchers alone kept the boat free from the swarm of monkey-like Portuguese, nearly two hundred strong, gesticulating and showing knives, while the rest of their comrades were half-persuading, half-carrying, that very indiscreet young man, Cornelius Kelly, back to the boat; Cornelius not being in the least drunk, but having been insulted by being called *Lutherano*, to which he could only answer by howling, "Mono! Mono!" That had been a very dangerous disturbance, as dangerous a one as Belem Castle sees often in these peaceful times. Also this young man had been in other rows of a different kind. His strong lungs and his commanding presence had brought him into trouble before now. While he was in the service of a small house, in a screw steamer off the west coast of South America, he, noticing the barometer and the weather generally, had given orders to get up steam and put to sea, the captain being still on shore, and he dreading a gale. There was no gale, only an earthquake, and he proved clearly that the ship would have been thrown a mile inland, if he had not given these orders; but the captain got him dismissed. In short, this young man Hartop had been in all kinds of trouble and bother, and had never yet shown himself afraid of anyone. When his certificate was in question he was as bold and as free before the court as any man. But this dry old lawyer frightened him to death. For a guilty man is frightened before a lawyer, and a sailor hates and dreads one. I think a real sailor fears nothing but a lawyer. What must a guilty sailor feel?

And Hartop was a deeply guilty man. To the people he loved and trusted more than any in the world, to Hartop and Hetty, Mr. Morley had confided the fact that he was going to ask Rebecca to be his wife, if things looked in any way promising; and had at the same time begged them never to confide the fact to any human being. The poor girl must not be put in a false position again. So young Hartop, being full of kindness and happiness, did not know how much his future father-in-law had said to Rebecca, and was under the general impression that old Turner was a Turk—with a large dowsy ready, provided no indiscretion was committed—who knew nothing about the arrangement. And also this Turk was a lawyer, a creature worse than any Turk. So the young man, treading on molten iron, bowed down, terrified, before Mr. Turner.

Mr. Turner could not have known this, but he might have guessed it possible. He was happy, as far as he could be, but the chance of bullying a young sailor was too good to be lost. He did not repress that young man at all.

"How do you do, Sir? My daughter informs me that you wish to take her out for a walk."

"If it met your views, Sir," said young Hartop.

"The question is, whether it meets my daughter's views?" said Mr. Turner, grimly. "Our neighbors are censorious. But if she wants to go, she can."

"I do want to go, pa," she said.

"Then get your bonnet on," he added, and followed her.

"Rebecca," he said to her, following her into her room, "there is no harm in that lad, my child. That lad is in love, and not with you."

"I know that," said Rebecca, cheerfully.

"Then look here," said her father; "don't cross-question him about this daughter of Morley's, this Hetty. It is not fair on him. If she has been a fool, he won't care much to tell you about it. Are you *quite* safe, old girl?"

"Quite safe, pa," said Rebecca. And somehow they kissed one another. And Rebecca said, "Pa, dear, why are we not always like this?"

And he said, "Let us try to be."

And so ended the incipient romance of the young sailor Hartop. At least as regards Rebecca.

CHAPTER XV.

REBECCA'S VOYAGE WITH HIM, AND WHAT THEY SAW, AND WHAT SHE SAW WHEN THEY CAME HOME.

THIS was the occasion of Rebecca's first voyage. And she took her voyage in the sole company of the young man whom she had considered to be dangerous to her peace of mind. And it is singular that he was not now—now that the brooding engendered by the house and by the lane were no more—no longer dangerous at all; but that she wanted to talk about Hetty, but did not do so because he did not; and that he did not talk about Hetty because he thought her a dangerous subject. For Hetty had broken rules. He talked about the sea, and about the wild free lands that lay beyond Limehouse. He asked her if she were a good sailor, and she answered that she supposed she was no worse than another, and repeated her question, "Was Hetty a good sailor?" and he repeated his previous mysterious answer, "It would be a queer thing, surely, if she were not."

The wind was free and fresh from the south, and the little steamer went fast and busy from wharf to wharf down the river. Under the bright sun, and the nimble pure air, and the changing of the scene, Rebecca grew happy, and showed her happiness by a thoughtful silence.

"Are you comfortable, Miss Turner?" said Hartop.

"I am more than comfortable. I am perfectly happy. I can not tell why, but it is so. It was wonderfully kind of you to bring me here. I have never seen any thing like this before in my life. This is most wonderful and most beautiful."

"It is as good as carrying the northeast trade over the line to hear you say so," replied Hartop.

Said Rebecca, "I wish we could go to some place where we could see which way the ship was going."

And so Hartop carried her to the front of the

little vessel, and set her there. And she said, "Would you be so good as not to talk to me? You sailors smoke your pipes, I know. Would you kindly smoke yours now, and let me sit in silence?"

Hartop sat on the deck at her feet to leeward and smoked. The little throbbing boat carried them both past the wharves and the city toward the sea; she sitting in a Cashmere shawl like a figure-head. From time to time she said to him, "Are you tired?" and he said, "No. He was very happy. Why should he be tired?"

"Because you are not talking to any body," said Rebecca. "I don't wish to talk; and I am afraid that I am bad company."

"You are very good and comfortable company," said Hartop. "The worst mate of all is a sulky mate, and the next worst is a jawing mate. I took you out for pleasure, not for jaw. For instance, where were you when you spoke?"

"I was at the island of St. Borondon, in the Atlantic. The island where all things go right for evermore," said Rebecca. "Where were you?"

"I don't know that island," said Hartop. "For my part, I was crawling along in a fruit brig under Teneriffe, and thinking how Hetty got on in that short-chopping North Sea. Break your slate, you know, and tilt the fragment up in the window above the level of your eye, and you get Teneriffe. But lor, *you* can't dream what Teneriffe is. And still less Tristan d'Acunha. And still less the approach to the Australian shore. No man knows what that is till he has seen it. Did you ever see the west front of Wells cathedral?"

"No. Why?"

"Because it is like Madeira, on the Atlantic side," said Hartop. "But what can you know about islands? You have never seen any."

Rebecca had not.

"Islands are like cathedrals. Have you ever seen a cathedral?"

Only St. Paul's, it seemed, with a distant view of Westminster.

"Mr. Morley told us you had seen nothing," said this young man. "Now, islands and cathedrals are one and the same thing. They are the cathedrals of the wide, cruel sea, and God Almighty built them with his own kind hands. The cathedrals ashore were built by the priests: the cathedrals of the sea were built by God Almighty's own hands. Think of that, Miss Rebecca. And what is the object of a cathedral? Peace. I have sailed with all creeds, and they all ask for peace; and I tell them all that after the wild wandering sea you get peace on an island. I wish we could go to an island—us four together."

Rebecca was too far in dream-land to ask him what he meant by "us four." The river grew yet and yet more busy, and at last the tall masts in the pool came in sight, the nimble little steamer stopped, and Hartop aroused her by saying, "Will you go back now, or where will you go?"

"Take me on toward the sea, and let me be still," she said. And in a few minutes the dextrous Hartop had her on board a boat bound for Gravesend, and they throbbed along on their strange voyage once more.

As the ships grew larger and larger her eyes seemed to expand. Hartop looked on her with

that strange reverential superstition which the highest class of sailor has toward a beautiful woman. The old sailors' fancy is that a ship in full sail, a field of corn, and a beautiful woman are the three finest things in nature; and the reason they will give you for this is, that all of these three things shadow out the hope of increase. For my own part, I know many less beautiful superstitions; but that part of it which relates to the beautiful woman was very much in bold Hartop's soul that day, as he sat looking stealthily at her, in the light of his future mother-in-law, thinking that she was really after all worthy of even Mr. Morley; and, moreover, turning over the wonderful fact that she had never seen Hetty in her life. *She* spoke at last.

"Are these the real ships that go down into the great deep sea?"

"Yes," he said, eagerly. "There they are, Miss Turner, ready for any thing, from Camerons to Sydney. See that long-bodied, low-lying screw there. Very sister!"—he succeeded in saying—"ship that Hetty was wrecked in two years ago."

"Has Hetty been shipwrecked, then?" said Rebecca.

Hartop looked at her wonderingly for an instant, but thought, "She knows nothing. It is for Morley to tell her."

"Yes, she has been wrecked three times now. That last time was the time when the Queen wrote to her and sent her the Bible. I have often laughed when I told her that I would never sail in the same ship with her."

"Wrecked three times!" said Rebecca, half-awakened. "Was Mr. Morley ever wrecked with his daughter?"

"Not likely," said Hartop. "The Lord don't cast his best tools aside like that. It is easy enough, Miss Turner, for a game and plucky girl like Hetty to stand on a cracking and bursting deck, with the cruel sea hurling around her, no hope of life, and keep a parcel of women from going quite mad, by singing of hymns to them, and by telling them of Christ who walked on the waters, as Hetty did; why, that is a thing any woman could do. You could do it if you gave your mind to it. Het did that, and Het is a brick. But she didn't do this. It took a man to do this. Mr. Morley went alone into the rowdiest drinking-house in the Nevada track in the old times in California. Taylor himself had warned him that he was a dead man if he went, for to refuse drink in that house meant death. Morley laughed at Taylor himself, went into the grog-shop, was challenged to drink, and then cast the liquor on the ground, and before he came out of that grog-shop had given them a piece of his mind. Taylor said that he would not have done it. What do you think of that, for instance?"

"I am all abroad," said Rebecca. "It would seem that Hetty is brave, but that Mr. Morley is braver."

"There is no man alive like Mr. Morley," said Hartop. "He don't know what fear is."

"Let us talk about these ships," said Rebecca, "and leave Mr. Morley to take care of himself."

So he told her all about them—where they sailed to, how strangely they leaped and plunged in their agony at sea, for all they were so still and silent now. This one had come from sliding

on slowly and silently among towering icebergs, the one beside her was fresh from the palm-fringed quays of the Pacific. So he sat in her gentle loyalty and talked to her, she speaking seldom, but sitting wrapped in herself: he never tiring of talking to her and sitting near her. Little did she dream of the tie which bound him so closely to her; little did she know what sacred and deeply-loved being she was to him; how he and the two others had talked about her hour by hour; how deeply important she was to three people: one of whom she had never seen, one whom she had seen but twice, and a third she had scarcely seen half a dozen times. These kind souls had been preparing a home for her in their hearts, and she knew not of it.

It was only when he left her, very late, they having come from Woolwich by railway, at her father's door, that she appreciated how utterly she had lost herself. "I fear he will scold me," she thought, "and our new-made confidence will suffer;" but the maid only heard that he was busy, and that Miss Caroline was in her room. Somehow the company of this most excellent and most admirable Carry did not seem in any way to suit this young lady who had been wool-gathering in the moon all day; she took off her hat, and catching up her little dog walked slowly along the hall.

When she was nearly opposite her father's room-door she put down her little dog and took off her hat, letting her hair fall down by accident. Mab immediately began to run round and round, barking, after her tail.

The noise instantly aroused Mr. Turner, for coming out quickly and closing the door behind him, he found himself face to face, under the light in the passage, with a beautiful and noble-looking woman, draped nearly from head to foot in a Cashmere shawl, with part of her hair fallen down—a woman who looked very quiet, still, and calm, and whom he recognized, to his own astonishment, as his own daughter, Rebecca.

He had never realized her before. He had never truly trusted her before. There was something now in the calm, strong, gentle face which made him see an ally, an ally worth all the world. Mr. Turner had been something else before he had been converted, it seemed; for the first real word of confidence he ever uttered to his daughter smelled very strongly of the evil odor of the old Adam.

"Where the devil have you been all this time?"

"I have been down among the ships with Hetty's lover, Tom Hartop," she said. "I am very sorry, father; but I was so happy—"

"Hang Tom Hartop," said Mr. Turner, in a whisper. "Come in here, and hold your tongue. I want your help, child; take up your dog and nurse it—it will be an excuse for not talking."

"Hetty is brave, but Morley is braver," was what she thought. "Let me see what I can do." So she took up Mab, stilled her and passed in, to find two men in her father's room, whom she had never seen before.

The first her eye rested on was a gallant-looking young gentleman, Lord Ducetoy. She had seen a specimen of his class before, had been with one all day, indeed; so her eyes turned to the other, who was a man the like of which she

had never seen before, and which, I hope, we may never see.

A noble-looking old gentleman. In his dress, in his hands, in his complexion, there was Gentleman written with no unerring hand. Yet sunk in a heap on a chair, with limp limbs, bowed head; and an appealing, whipped-hound look in his handsome face. She had never seen such a fine gentleman before; and she had never seen such a hopeless look of humble pleading woe. Mr. Spicer the sweep on Sunday, or Jim Akin the coster-monger, looked grander than he.

"My daughter," said Mr. Turner, as he brought in Rebecca. "Lord Ducetoy, Sir Gorhambury Townsend."

"You have brought in the young lady to put a stop to this conversation, I suppose?" said Sir Gorhambury.

"That is the case exactly," said Mr. Turner. But Lord Ducetoy and Sir Gorhambury, both heated, continued it.

"I never harmed you, Ducetoy. That protest from the bank only came from one of the rascally directors. Why should you serve me thus?"

"Because, uncle, as I have told you before, I do not desire that my plate, jewels, and bonds should go in the bankruptcy."

"And as I have told you before, the mere redeposit of them would just enable us to pull through. If the chattels and papers so long left in our hands were now deposited again, it would give confidence in quarters where we want confidence, and pull us through."

"Uncle, the utmost I will do will be to pay in £500, and not withdraw my account."

"I have never, I swear solemnly," said Sir Gorhambury, "done any thing to injure any human being. I worked hard at that bank, and we sold it for £200,000. Since then I have been living as a country squire. By my connection with religion I attracted deposits from Christian widows and orphans. It is not I only that am ruined, for my estates will not one-half stand the drain on them. 'I could stand an almshouse myself (God knows, I wish I were alone with God in one now), but all these widows and orphans are to sink into poverty through their trust in me. I profess, and I ruin widows and orphans, all because my nephew refuses to deposit papers and jewels which would pull us through. And my poor son. Oh, my poor son! And so you won't pull us through as you might? The mere fact of your moving them to another banker's is ruin to us."

"I tell you, uncle, that I will not remove my account."

"Your account. Our only assets are your mortgages. These papers, you have moved them to another banker's. Where are they then?" said the old man, with his first flush of fire. Turner answered:

"Sir Gorhambury, the papers to which you allude are in a place which renders it unlikely that they will ever be used in a criminal court against any one. I am sorry to close the conversation in this way, but consider it closed."

Sir Gorhambury said not one word, but rose firmly and calmly, and walked toward the door. Lord Ducetoy said, "Good-night, uncle," but the old man never answered him. Mr. Turner was going to escort him to the door, when he sudden-

ly found himself confronted by his daughter, with a candle in her hand, who boldly and firmly put her hand upon his chest and pushed him back. Saying, in a whisper,

"That is a broken man; he wants a woman with him." Turner bowed his head reverentially and went back. Sir Gorhambury went down stairs with Rebecca, holding the light.

"You have lost your money, Sir, have you not?" she said.

He answered, "Yes."

"A good many people who come here have lost their money," she said, briskly. "I wish I had lost mine; all the trouble I ever had in my life has been through the money my father is going to leave me when he dies, which will be the bitterest day of my life. Keep up your spirits, and laugh about it."

"You can not laugh after seventy, Madam," said the old man; yet she fancied that he walked out into the dim dark night more cheerfully for what she had said.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CONFIDENCE OF THREE.

WHEN she came back Lord Ducetoy was walking up and down, and saying:

"It would have been perfectly monstrous for me to do what he proposed. I might have ruined myself, and gone to Canada again to help him; but to help an unlimited company?—no. You will continue your trust, for friendship's sake. Ah, here is my cousin. Cousin, if you were engaged to the finest girl in the whole world—who, I am happy to say, has not ten pounds—you would scarcely put a considerable part of your property into bankruptcy to please your uncle!"

"As I never was engaged to the finest girl in the world," said Rebecca; "and as I have no uncle, I can not answer the question, Lord Ducetoy. But it is supper-time, and I am very hungry; for I have spent most of the day among the ships down the river, in company with a very handsome young sailor; a man I am getting more and more fond of every time I see him—a young man who will be fairly in a position to marry after his next voyage."

If Lord Ducetoy had lived only in England he might have mistaken her. But he had been to the Westward, and had seen what pure and true gallantry may exist between man and woman, with the most entire freedom of innocent speech. Mr. Turner's brow grew dark when she said this. Lord Ducetoy laughed, and said, "You are bridlemaid, then; and who is the bride?"

"Hetty Morley is the bride," said Rebecca, at supper, with her eyes wide open; "but what *she* is I can not conceive. She has done something extraordinary, has pulled down the pillars of the Philistines' temple in some way. But I want to speak about the old man whom I saw out. Be tender with him, you two. I mean my Lord, and Father."

"Believe me we will, Miss Turner," said Lord Ducetoy. "Believe me that we mean nothing else. He will never want for any thing he has been accustomed to till the day of his death. Tell my cousin that."

"Why do you call me cousin?" said Rebecca.

"Your mother was my first cousin," said he.

And soon after that she went away; but her father told her not to go to bed. Lord Ducetoy said, when she had gone away,

"What a splendid creature! How have I angered her?"

"By mentioning your cousinship, my lord. In our case our family connection with yours has not been happy; the girl knows something of it, or her instincts have told her. And instead of harking back to the traditions of your order, or staying in the respectable mean of ours, she has cast herself into utter Radicalism, which has given me great trouble in my religious connection. The girl don't know a duchess from a dustman's wife."

"Well, I got the same way of thinking in the prairies," said the honest young fellow.

"Yes, there is no Radical like a young Whig," said Turner, with a sneer.

"I shall get it all knocked out of me as I grow up, then," said Lord Ducetoy.

"Undoubtedly," said Turner, suddenly and keenly, some old gleam of Puritan democracy flashing out irrepressibly. "In your class the metal never rings true. It can't. Every word you say is said with a view to excuse your order, to excuse its mere existence."

"We are afraid of your attacking our property, you see," said the youth; "you democrats are always holding that over us; that is what makes Tories. It is odd that a man like you, who have made so much money by the mere legal waifs and strays of our family property, should be a Radical. I am. I have land in Canada, and land in the United States; and, if you don't know it, I can tell you that society in New England is much pleasanter than I can find in this cockneyfied England."

Mr. Turner was not prepared with arguments. This young lord was mad. *At that time.* He would not be considered quite so mad now. The idea of a man of many acres, and high position, craving for the rest and peace of pure democracy was horrifying to him. His religion was tolerably democratic, certainly; but he had never reduced it to practice.

There was one thing he knew, however, and practiced too, which he had got from his religion—mercy.

Rebecca was waiting for him in his bedroom, and she began:

"What is the matter about that old gentleman?"

"I kept you up to tell you," he answered. "He and his brother sold their bank to a company, and retired on their property, leaving their accumulated property liable to the claims of the limited company; and his brother has died without any children; and the old man has left his eldest son in the bank; and both father and son, to keep things square, have forged names. They have forged my name among others; and I have got the forged papers in the house, and they know it. And I want to spare the old one if I can; but the young one knows I have his forgeries here, and he has set men on—for burglary, no less. If those papers were to go out of my hands and get into the bankruptcy which is coming, those two men, father and son, would go to Portland. If I were to remove the jewelry to another

er banker's it would be known, and bring on the smash sooner. And so it is all here, and you know it. Thirty thousand pounds are under that bed. So keep awake, and keep your dog awake. Give me a kiss and go to bed now."

CHAPTER XVII.

A WEDDING.

As the little story runs on, we must come again to Mr. Hagbut's affair.

Was this actually Carry? Yes, it was actually Carry. Rebecca had helped to dress her, but Rebecca scarcely knew her, when she came into the room in her modest bride's dress. She was so pretty and so bright that Rebecca scarcely knew her own sister.

Rebecca was by no means acting as bride-maid: far from it. In the first place, her father had rebelled against bridesmaids altogether; and in the course of a somewhat peppery conversation with Rebecca had said that she herself, considering what her relations with the bridegroom had been, had much better stay away herself. But Rebecca, getting more and more sure of her position with her father every day, had declined to stay away.

"Not see old Carry married!" she said; "I am sure I would not miss it for all the world. She has been a dear, good, loving sister to me, and has borne more petulance from me than I ever have from her."

"Then you don't feel any spite against her or him?" said Mr. Turner.

"Law, pa, what nonsense!" said Rebecca.

Although there were no real bridesmaids, at the same time two young ladies were, as Hartop or Morley (or, for that matter, Hetty) would have said, "told off" to act in that capacity. They were from Miss Soper's school, and they wept as copiously as any bridesmaids at St. George's, Hanover Square. Carry did not feel at all as if she wanted to cry; but she thought it was the proper thing to do, and cried hard.

The neighbors came in and chattered and giggled—Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper among them. After they had come in and saluted the bride Miss Soper drove her sharp elbow into Mrs. Russel's side, and said:

"Is he coming?"

"Who?" said Mrs. Russel.

"Morley."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Russel. "Don't shove like that; you've broke two of my ribs, I do believe."

"Where's she?" said Miss Soper.

"Who?" said Mrs. Russel.

"Rebecca."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Russel. "She will hardly have the face to show, I should think. I wish you would get out of that trick of ramming your elbow into another person's ribs when you ask a question. I'm black and blue—No. Why, that's her, ain't it, again the wall?"

It was her, Mrs. Russel. That grand beauty, with her chin on her hand and her elbow on her knee, who sat alone, with her great speculative eyes, seeing beyond you and the crowd behind you, was Rebecca. And as she sat there that morning, all alone, dressed in dove-colored silk

and pearls, there was scarcely a handsomer woman in all old England, from palace to cottage. Your eye was not trained for beauty; you could not see it.

Miss Soper could, to a certain extent. In her business of schoolmistress she had had so much beauty put under her eye that she knew it when she saw it. Mrs. Russel's definition of beauty would have limited itself to "a fresh complexion." Miss Soper had a dim idea of generalizing from fact. Jewelers' clerks get a knowledge of what is the prevailing taste in jewelry. An old picture-dealer's clerk will tell you what will sell, and what will not. So Soper, in her trade, knew a pretty girl when she saw one, though in her office of dragon she disliked receiving them. But she knew more. She was well-connected in the trade, and she knew houses who would take an article which was seldom offered to her, and which often, in her way of doing things, gave her great trouble—a very handsome girl. So looking at Rebecca, she said:

"She is wonderfully handsome."

"Do you think so, my dear?" said Mrs. Russel. "I can't see it."

"No one ever supposed so," said Miss Soper.

"Don't shove again, dear; pray don't," said Mrs. Russel.

"What did I tell you about that girl, when we got her forbidden to go out of the lane?" said Miss Soper.

"I forget," said Mrs. Russel.

As it seemed that Miss Soper had forgotten also, she resumed the discussion at another point.

"Shall we go and speak to her?" said Miss Soper.

"My dear soul," said the really good Russel, "I think we ought. The poor child is pining over Mr. Hagbut; it would be only kind."

Was she, Mrs. Russel? No, she was away from you all, with the sounds of the great sea. While she had been sitting there in her dove-colored silk all alone she had watched your figures till she had tired of them, and had gone to sea once or twice. You were quite out of her thought. She did not want to be naughty, but she could. Why did not you leave her alone?

She could be horribly naughty, and she had the most intense dislike for these two ladies. If you had told her that Mrs. Russel was only a hot-tempered, gossiping scold, who would have given the bed from under her to release the son she had scolded out of doors, she would have laughed at you. If you had told her that that intolerable woman, Miss Soper, was in her way a heroine, and had slaved all her life to keep a ruined family together, and in doing so—in training virtuous women, had done more good than was ever likely to fall to the share of our poor Rebecca, she would have laughed at you again. Their formulas had been rendered hateful to her, and she hated them through their formulas, which had plagued her. She was a very naughty girl, and they made her naughtier.

She was rounding some dim wild cape in a gale of wind, and there were two with her whom she knew and one who always stood perversely behind her. And the one who stood behind her kept saying like a cuckoo, "Not yet. Not yet." And again like a blackbird, "Not till you're fit. Not till you're fit." And there suddenly approach to her her deadly enemies, the Russel and

the Soper. What reader would trust her temper under such circumstances?

She rose and gave them a sweeping courtesy, and, may I say it, the devil entered into her. It was only a very little one.

"Are you quite well, Miss Turner?" said the fat Russel.

"I am quite well, thank you," said Rebecca. "I had a holiday lately. It has done me much good."

"Indeed! another?" said the Soper, alluding to the terrible escapade to Ramsgate.

"Yes," said Rebecca, looking at her with a look which the Soper had never seen in any of her school-girl's faces. "Another. A young gentleman from the sea, came and took me out for a holiday, and he took me down the river all the way to Gravesend. And we were together all day."

"Who went with you, my dear?" said Mrs. Russel.

"He did," said Rebecca.

"No one else?"

"What did we want with any one else? He was very handsome and agreeable, and a third would have been one too many. I should like you to be introduced to that young gentleman, Miss Soper. His hair is so beautiful. Little curls all over his head. He sat at my feet the most of the time, and if I had had a pair of scissors, I believe I should have snipped one off."

"The allied powers retreated. Says Russel, 'That girl will go to the bad.'"

"Not she," hissed Soper in her ear. "She is just the very one of all others who won't. She is not in my line—I don't have that article in my establishment; but I know enough to know that."

Rebecca said to herself, "It is the only way to treat you people. If kings and priests would not make outrageous pretensions, democracy would die: at least pa says so. Ha! you two; Carry said you were coming."

She sat perfectly still after this, in her old attitude, quite quiet, knowing that they would come to her. The chairs beside her were unoccupied, for the Philistines did not know exactly whether they ought to go near her, and her father made no sign. "Those two" were quickly sitting beside her. She was determined to amuse herself, and in answer to their greetings she replied, without raising her chin from her hand,

"Where is Hetty?"

"She is at home," said Mr. Morley.

"What is she doing?" said Rebecca, without moving.

"She is not doing any thing to-day," said young Hartop. "She is getting the duds together. Change of ship, you know."

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Morley. "Mind your promise."

Rebecca, from young Hartop's silence, thought that Morley was angry; but moving her chin from her hand and looking up in his face she saw that his eyebrows were raised, and that the corners of his mouth were down. She also noticed that he looked more handsome than any man she had ever seen. But she had noticed that before.

The next properly arranged wedding you go to, when you have looked at the bridegroom long enough, look at the bride's father. If it is a well arranged marriage there will be the same light in

the eyes of both. This was not a well arranged wedding, for our poor Rebecca, whom I hope you have forgiven, had rather spoiled it by her wild conduct. Mr. Hagbut had changed rather quickly too; and there was a cloud over it by his mere presence. Mr. Turner, man of the world, knew this, and did not show to advantage; he was haggard and worn, and bent his head.

He had been into the room and out again. She had scarcely noticed him at first, but when he came in a second time, she watched his bowed head and rose to her feet.

I know a young lady of such strange and radiant beauty, that I and my companion always know, when we go to a country gathering, in one instant, whether she is there or not. Rebecca's beauty was not so great as that lady's, I will allow; yet when she rose from between Hartop and Mr. Morley her presence was felt. The babble which was going on in awaiting the bridegroom died into whispers—into silence—as she came softly forward and kissed her father.

"Give me your blessing, father!"

Turner raised his head as she bent hers.

"The Lord of Miriam and of Jael bless thee, my daughter. Smite as Jael, then sing as Miriam. Thou art blessed, oh my daughter!"

And so he kissed her, and she went back and sat between Hartop and Mr. Morley again.

"He has forgiven her," whispered Mrs. Russel.

"Hold your tongue," said Miss Soper. "There is something I can't understand about this, and so I don't suppose you can."

"Keep close to me you two," said Rebecca, in a whisper; "I am frightened. Don't leave me you two."

"Are you ill?" said Hartop, also in a whisper.

"No, I am never ill. But these people frighten me. This house is frightful, and the lane is frightful. You don't know what this house is. There is poison in it. My father can not give me his blessing without frightening me. And Carry says that there is blood at the foot of the stairs," she added, wildly and hurriedly. "Why should he talk of Jael?"

"I wish Hetty was here," said Hartop, in a low voice.

"Quiet, my child, quiet!" said Mr. Morley, laying his hand on her arm; "talk of something else. What shall we talk of?"

"The sea," said Rebecca, herself in an instant; "I want to know about the sea, or about Hetty Morley."

"There is no such person," said Hartop, turning and looking into Rebecca's face.

"No such person!" said Rebecca, aghast. "Is she drowned?"

"Not a bit of it," said Hartop, bringing his face close to hers; "Hetty is alive, but she is Hetty Hartop now, for she and I were married by Mr. Morley yesterday morning."

Her dull horror of the old house and the quaint company was gone at once by this pretty piece of news. It was something so bright, so human, so—well, so romantic, that a great smile spread over her face, as she said,

"No."

"Fact, I assure you. Yesterday morning. You were not to be told, but I saw you were getting low." And, indeed, the tact of this young

sailor was very great, for Rebecca was quite roused again and gay.

"You provoking people. I want to see Hetty, and you will tell me nothing of her."

"It wouldn't do here," said Hartop; "they wouldn't stand it."

"But what is she like?" asked Rebecca.

"What is she like?" said the bridegroom.

"Why, she is like her father; that's about what she is like. You've seen *him*," he growled.

Rebecca turned on Mr. Morley. "She is like you!"

"But younger, you know, and more good-looking," said Mr. Morley, with a bow.

And Rebecca had just settled emphatically in her mind that Hetty was very handsome, when enter the bridegroom.

"Why, that is never him," said Rebecca, suddenly.

It was, though. A man at his best—and a man generally makes the best of himself when he is going to be married—is a very different thing from a man at his worst. Rebecca and Hartop had only known him at his worst, and even Morley, knowing him better than they did, was surprised. "That big, fat, pale-faced man," he thought, "has actually more vitality than I have. I shall last longer, but if I had been what he has been, I could not have shown such a presence."

A man, we must remember, with sufficient physique for the first or second life-guards, who has spent his life in talking religionism to foolish and uneducated women, is very likely to become fat, ill-dressed, and untidy. But put that man on his mettle. Get him rejected by a beautiful girl, and make him bridegroom to another girl, and I fancy you will find some of the old Adam in him. There was a considerable deal of the old Adam in Hagbut that day; so much that he looked a rather noble person.

Rebecca leaned back in wonder, and said aloud (for she knew that no one could hear her but Mr. Morley and Hartop, and she did not "mind" them), "I could not have believed it. Why the man is handsome and noble looking."

"Is there any reason why he should *not* look noble?" said Mr. Morley, quietly. "My dear child, that man has done more good in his day than ever you will have the chance of doing, even if you had the power or the will. His formulas displease you; they are purely scriptural, and move the dead bones of the middle class into life. His vulgarity displeases you; that very vulgarity is the key-note of his power among the vulgar, who would dislike and possibly resent the ministrations of a scholar and a gentleman, who could not understand their ways of thought, and who would continually keep their inferiority before their eyes, by talking in a dialect more refined than their own. I pray God that when I die I may claim to have done as much good as Hagbut has."

"Yes!" said Rebecca, thinking.

"Yes, indeed," said Morley. "There are those who say that such men as Hagbut vulgarize religion. It is not true, or at best only half true. They find a vulgarized religion among vulgar people, and they preach it as honestly and as nobly as this man has; and he raises his people by doing so."

"How can he raise them by being vulgar?" asked Rebecca.

"He raises them, in spite of all his vulgarity, to the level of Christianity: and at that point both he and they cease to be vulgar. I dare say that the Covenanters ate with their knives, but they could die like the best gentleman of the lot. While there are vulgar people you must have vulgar priests. I, being a gentleman myself, know that well. That man Hagbut, whose ways of speech and of action are an offense to me, has brought more souls to Christ than ever I shall bring with my twopenny refinements. He comes of their own class, and their language is his. Their language is foreign to me, and I can not imitate it. And that lower middle class is the very one which wants rousing and exciting. The great use of the dissenting clergymen is to rouse that class, and to ennoble them. Hagbut can do it. I can not. I am a useless man compared to him."

"Yet you can bring sailors to chapel, Sir," said Hartop, quietly.

"Ah, yes, I can do that," said Mr. Morley, with sudden animation. "Yes, boy, I *can* do that. That was a good thing for you to say. Yes! yes! they come again and again. It is not utterly nothing to keep lads in the faith their mothers taught them through all temptations. You must come down and hear me preach some day, Miss Turner. See, the bride is moving. We must go."

So they went. And Hagbut married Carry; and the Hagbut episode in her little life came to an end.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFIDENCES.

AND Carry was gone, and Rebecca had to undertake her duties.

"I shall make a fine mess of it at first, pa," she said to her father on the first day, "for I have been most diligently idle all my life. But I will do the best I can. I can't scold and worry, but I will keep the maids in order for all that. You sha'n't want any thing, my dear."

"You will do well enough if you care to do it," said Mr. Turner. "I don't want scolding or worrying; I have lost my faith in it. That is what made the mischief between your mother and me."

"Well, dear pa, that is all over and gone. We shall be happy together, you know."

"I don't know. You may be happy, for you have hope before you—the hope of my death. I am a broken man. I wish I was dead."

"I am sure I don't know why, father," said Rebecca, with a heavy heart and a light tongue; "what nonsense you talk. Is there any man in our connection more honored than you are? As for the money I am to have at your death, I wish you would leave it to Carry, and then you would not suspect my love."

"You are a foolish girl."

"I think you are a very foolish man," said Rebecca, stoutly; "that prospective money has been the greatest plague of my life; I wish it was in the deep Atlantic. That—Mr. Hagbut would have left me alone if it had not been for that money."

"You were too good for him," said Turner. "Child, have you ever thought of any one else?"

"As a husband?"

"Yes; as a husband."

"Certainly," said Rebecca; "for a whole week I thought I should have liked *very much* to marry young Hartop. But, here, he has gone and married Hetty, leaving me desolate and disconsolate. There was never any one so shamefully deceived as I have been."

"Do you know Hetty Morley?" said Mr. Turner.

"No, I don't," said Rebecca; "the artful young puss! When I do I will give her a piece of my mind. Young—I mean Mr. Hartop, has used me shamefully. It is all very well for you to laugh, pa, but you wouldn't like it yourself."

"Come here," said Mr. Turner. And Rebecca came and sat at his feet.

"I have been a hard father to you, my child, and I do not know how I have won your love. But I seem to have it. God is very good. He is not what they want to make Him out, is He?"

Rebecca answered her father by stroking his hand and putting it to her lips.

"My head is growing old, girl. I am a broken man; but I will do my duty to the very last. I am not to be trusted. This responsibility about Ducetoy's papers is killing me. I never thought I should have found my truest, kindest friend in you; but it is so. You will stay by me to the end?"

"To the death, father," she did not want him to get excited, and so she said no more.

"You are a better man than I am, child, and I wander to-night. But, believe me, that Morley's God is the true God—is the true God—and not Hagbut's. Where is the little dog?"

"She is here, father," said Rebecca, putting Mab on his lap.

"Pretty little beast; bonny little beast. Bark for us, little one. Defend us. My dear Rebecca, the God who made this little thing was not Hagbut's God, but Morley's."

"There is one—but one God, father," said Rebecca. And she said it because she did not know what to say.

"Yes, but they make two or three. See, girl? Will you promise me one thing?"

"I will do as you tell me," said Rebecca; "if you will be always as you are now."

"Promise me that you will never join the established church after I am dead."

Rebecca sat silent for a long time. At last she said:

"I don't think that I could promise as much as that, father. I think it extremely improbable, but I will not pledge myself. I tell you honestly that if I were to quit our connection I should go either to the Moravians or to the Primitive Methodists."

"They are not a very high sect, my child," said Mr. Turner.

"I don't *want* a very high sect," said Rebecca; "that is just where it is."

with the favorite daughter of his dead wife, began to mope and brood over that miserable old business. It was evident also to Rebecca that his mind was not by any means what it had been.

She was free to go where she would now, but she never went far out of the lane, except a few times as far as Putney Bridge. She used to slip across sometimes to see Mrs. Spicer or Mrs. Akin, in a quiet neighborly way, and hear their gossip, give them books, and other little things, doing them high honor. It would have been an evil time for any man who insulted her while Mr. Spicer or Akin were near.

Those two worthies were the very picture of comfort and contentment every Sunday morning, each in his shirt-sleeves and a long pipe in his mouth, as Rebecca took her father to chapel; but one morning she missed them, and thought they had gone for an expedition somewhere. "It is very little pleasure they get," she thought. "We ought not to begrudge it to them." But when they got inside the chapel who should be sitting near the door but Spicer and Akin in their best clothes! Rebecca flushed up with real pleasure, and when service was over, she made her father stop while she spoke to them.

"I am so glad to see you here."

"Yes, Miss," replied Akin. "It looked so nice seeing you and the gove'nor going every Sunday that we thought we'd go. That's about the size of it, Miss."

"I hope you like it."

"Yes, Miss, we likes it well enough," said Jim Akin, "but we don't make much fist on it at fust."

"Ah! you won't find it strange long," said Rebecca. And so they parted.

Her father asked her, as they went home under the dull gray sky, if she had asked these men to come to chapel; and she had said, "No, that she had never mentioned it to them;" and he said, "I am very glad of that. Whatever you do, don't undertake the responsibility of forcing religion on other people. Let them find it out for themselves—" He was going on to say a great deal more, as it seemed to Rebecca from the tone of his voice; but he checked himself suddenly.

It was dull, miserable, dripping, motionless weather, and she sat day after day utterly alone while her father was away on business; alone save for her little dog. She tried hard to be very good, and, as is usually the case when a person tries that, she succeeded. Only she fretted a little that she did not hear from her friends in Limehouse.

Many things in the housekeeping were great puzzles to her, and she used to take them patiently, and lay them at the feet of her beloved old nurse, Tibbey, in Leader Street, Chelsea; but it was rather a long way there, so she saw but little of those excellent souls at present.

One day there came a letter which made her cry; it was from Mr. Morley. Jack Hartop and Hetty were off to sea, and Hetty was so hard at work, shifting into her new ship, that it would be quite impossible for her, or Jack either, to get to Walham Green. He added, that as soon as they were gone, he would very likely come and see her himself. She cried a good deal over this letter, but it was not in anger and rebellion. That nightmare, Mr. Hagbut, being removed

CHAPTER XIX.

DARKER HOURS STILL.

DULL was the old house, duller, alas! than ever it was, for there was not even old Carry now; and Mr. Turner, left alone in the house

from his position of possible husband, she rather liked him than otherwise, and was at peace with all the world; and the Limehouse people had done her much good; and she was in one way and another very far from the Rebecca of old times. She cried because she had wanted to see Hetty; and she told her father so, frankly, that night, when he asked her why her eyes were red.

"Why do you want to see her?" he asked.

"I don't know. I am sure she is nice."

"Why?"

"Because those two are so fond of her, and those two are the nicest people I know."

"Miss Hetty Morley," said Mr. Turner, "chose to disgrace herself and ruin her father's connection by a stupid and rebellious course of action. As Mrs. Hartop she is continuing it. If you walked the earth round you would not find, in the dissenting connection, three such sentimental idiots as Morley, his daughter, and Jack Hartop."

"What has Hetty done, pa?"

"Degraded herself; dropped into a low sphere of life, and dragged her fool of a father down with her. Morley may choose to tell you in his own good time—for he is as obstinate as a pig—what she has done; but he chooses to keep the secret, and I won't betray him."

"But you like Mr. Morley, pa?"

"Yes. He is a good and a noble man, a pure Christian, and a real gentleman; but he will have to answer to God for his indulgence to that girl."

"But you would listen to him on spiritual matters?"

"Yes, to no man sooner. But he has been a fool in a worldly point of view, by allowing that girl to do as she has done."

And this was all she could get out of her father. And the great mystery about Hetty was no nearer solution than ever.

This was probably the most weary time she had ever had; for even if Carry had been there she had lost the heart to scold her, and so her sole amusement was gone. She had her cats, and was still kind to them, though her little dog Mab had supplanted them in her affections. She told Mab every thing now; and Mab seemed to understand. She could have told her father every thing, but there was a reason.

At one time, not long ago, she had believed that there would have been perfect accord between herself and her father. It was not to be. The overwhelming sense of responsibility with regard to Lord Ducetoy's papers were too much for his mind, and it became clouded; and in its clouding there came on a phase of religious doubt, which may be laughed at by doctrinaires, but which in practice, in reality, was, to Rebecca at least, horrible.

If he would have broken out into unbelief and sheer blasphemy at once, she could have stood it better. But he got dreadful silent fits, ending in sharp-pointed deductions, the result of an hour's solitary, silent argument with himself. He would sit perfectly silent, with his hands occasionally wandering one over the other for an hour, until he nearly drove the silently sewing Rebecca opposite him 'out of her mind; and, at last, when the poor, unguided girl, working so hard and so nobly at her duty, was nearly out of her mind through sheer nervousness, he would say, suddenly and sharply:

"If one actually regains consciousness after the dissolution of the body, and if one finds that the whole scheme has been a mistake from beginning to end. How then? One will regret that one had not been a profligate; a man who takes such pleasure as he can find, and discounts his bills on the future state."

And so on. Which has nothing to do with us further than this. It was horrible and intolerable to Rebecca. It frightened her. She had rebelled against a certain close form of nonconformist Christianity, as being narrow, cold, and in her eyes worthless, because it wanted the one element of sentimentalism. There had come to her the stout nonconformist Morley, who had shown her a form of dissent as beautiful and as spiritual as the highest forms of Anglicanism or Romanism, though wanting in the ceremonialisms which, as the daughter of a Papist mother, she loved in her heart. And now here was her father cutting the ground from under her feet, just as she was feeling for it. De profundis clamavit; that is to say, she turned on her father once and said, most emphatically,

"I am sorry you have lost your faith, pa; but I can't see that there is the slightest reason for your undermining mine; I am beginning to believe. Please let me."

Turner saw what she meant, and uttered no more of his doubts. But he sat there, opposite Rebecca, night after night, scowling over his Bible as he turned the leaves, and looking unutterable things. Which did not mend matters much for poor Rebecca—which in fact made them rather worse, for she could never tell what he was thinking of now.

In the foolish old days, before one thought, many of us used to read the accounts of the prize-fights in *Bell's Life*; and one used to read that Bob So-and-so "was a glutton for punishment." Now I claim for Rebecca that she was a better "glutton for punishment" than any snake-headed, bright-eyed young man who ever made a brute of himself in the prize ring.

Punishment enough she got in these days. Her father fading and growing mad before her eyes. No society; and as it seemed to her no hope. The responsibility of the enormous amount of valuable heir-looms and papers in the house, thrown on her own shoulders, for her father was as no one save in his determination to hold by them. No help, no advice, nothing for her but a dull, mulish obstinacy; a determination to act honestly as circumstances should direct. And all the time her father in one of his "girding" moods; accusing her of idleness, and making his case good to her about her dead mother. Punishment enough, poor child! But she took it bravely and nobly.

"Pa," she said, one night, "don't gird at me!"

His face had been fixed before, but it relaxed now.

"Have I been girding at you, Rebecca?"

"Yes, pa. Don't, please."

"I won't, dear. I didn't mean to. Tell me when I gird at you, and I will leave off."

CHAPTER XX.

OTHELLO, MOOR OF VENICE.

At last Mr. Morley came. Surely no brown, handsome face, no quiet hazel eyes, no very slightly grizzled head of curling hair was ever more welcome in a Christian house than were his.

It was in the dreary middle of the day when he came, and Rebecca, who was kneading dough (and making an awful mess of it) uttered a joyful exclamation when she saw him. I think that I have mentioned before that in social matters this odd young lady was rather radical. She certainly behaved on this occasion in a way which would have horrified the better conducted sister Carry. She ran up the stairs and opened the door herself with her hands, nay, with her finely-moulded bare arms all over flour, and she said: "Come in; I thought you must be dead. Tell me about those two."

"Go and wash your hands, and come and talk to me in the parlor," said Mr. Morley, quietly, and Rebecca slid away and did as he told her.

"Now," she said, when she was seated by him on the sofa, "tell me all about Jack and Hetty."

"That will depend on your account of your behavior," said Mr. Morley. "How have you been behaving?"

"I have been as good as gold."

"Then I shall not tell you one word," said Mr. Morley; "you are in a vainglorious and self-seeking frame of mind, and I will mortify you by not telling you one single word."

"Well, then, I have been very naughty."

"One of your propositions must be false, and so I shall certainly tell you nothing now."

"Then you are a most disagreeable man, and I hate you—no I don't—don't mind me. I love you very much, Mr. Morley. Only come sometimes and tell me what to do, for really and truly I don't know."

"You have been well brought up, and you ought to know for yourself. At least I mean to leave you to find out. How is your father?"

Rebecca remained perfectly silent, with her chin in her hand for a long time, and Morley sat looking at her steadily, although she did not know it. She sat so long thus that he repeated his question, I very much fear to catch the light in her eye. Rebecca turned to him quickly for one instant, and he had his will. She gave him one kindly glance, and saying, "Wait a little," resumed her old attitude of thought—that of Michael Angelo's Lorenzo de Medici.

Morley waited for her in silence and in patience. "Here," he said to himself, "is a woman who will actually think before she speaks. Here is also a woman who can act, who has acted, on far-seeing, deliberate conviction, careless of present consequences. Are there two Hettys in the world?" He sat and watched her, wondering what would come.

He had a long time to wait before it came, for she did not open her mouth until she had made up her mind. And then she told him every thing, decisively, and straightforwardly, as one man tells a whole matter to another man who is his friend.

She moved closer to him on the sofa where they sat, so that the two beautiful faces were not

very far apart, and so that her eyes could look straight up into his. And there and then she told him every thing.

Her wasted, rebellious, furious youth; her secret hankering after popery—the religion of her mother, he must mind—as promising some sort of rest to her furious heart; the quieting effect that the gentle Primitive Methodists had had on her always; her rage and hatred against Hagbut because he wanted to marry her; the real reason of her wild escapade to Ramsgate; her love for her father; her love for Carry; her love for her little dog; her love for Mr. Spicer and Jim Akin; her love for Jack Hartop; for Hetty, whom she had never seen, and her love for him—Morley. "I assure you, Mr. Morley, that I believe I am a most affectionate person, if I had a fair chance. But people are so cross. I'd get fond of old Russel and old Soper if they would only be civil."

Mr. Morley said, "Quite so."

Then she went on, resuming the Lorenzo de Medici attitude again, and leaving herself and her experience, told him in a plain, business-like manner, the whole story of her father, and her troubles from beginning to end. "For," she said, "you have got kind, trust-worthy eyes, like Mab's, and if one wants to keep out of Bedlam, one must tell some one. And so she told him all about the fearful responsibility her father had undertaken, pointed out to him that her father's action was nearly illegal, being done without the consent of trustees, of whom Sir Gorham Philpott was one.

Here Mr. Morley interrupted her for a moment. "Was Lord Ducetoy married?"

"No; and he would not get married for a month or so, until affairs were in some way square. He was to be married to Miss Egerton of Delamere."

Mr. Morley was satisfied at once, and begged her to proceed.

She went on at once, eagerly, not catching the drift of Morley's last inquiry; for he was so surprised at Turner's singular and chivalrous behavior that it had entered into his, not generally a suspicious mind, that Turner wished Lord Ducetoy to marry Rebecca. Rebecca, I say, went on, and told him of the clouding of her father's mind; of his religious doubts; of his strange midnight wanderings up and down the old house; of the awful responsibility which weighed on her with regard to him. She told him all; and then, turning her face to his again, asked for his advice.

"It is easily given, Rebecca," he said; "go on as you are going now. Do your duty to him as you are doing it now, and you will not fail. You have a clear sharp brain, *use it*; and you will do well."

"But I have *done* nothing," said Rebecca.

"What could you do?" said Morley.

Rebecca's chin went in her hand again directly; and after a time she said:

"I don't see, speaking honestly, that I could have done any more than I have. The time for action has not come. And then I am such a fool, you know."

"Are you?"

"They all say so."

"Well, then, of course it is true. About this business, taken as a whole, you can do nothing

more than you have done. It is one of those matters on which one can not decide. Your father is behaving splendidly; but if his religion goes from him in the struggle, your father will die. I will talk to him. You are a good girl; indeed, I always thought you were, do you know; and Morley laughed.

"That is all very fine," said Rebecca; "but at the same time one would like a little practical advice."

"I'll manage matters for you, my child," said Morley. "I'll shift no responsibility off your shoulders on to mine, but I will make things easier for you. You do your little duty, and you will come to no harm."

"Then you don't think me such a very naughty girl?"

"Well, well! you are behaving well now."

"Am I naughtier than Hetty?"

"You leave Hetty alone; Hetty is no business of yours."

"But Hetty was naughty. What did she do, Mr. Morley?"

"She was exceedingly naughty, and I was very nearly being angry with her; that is what she did."

"Am I never to see Hetty?"

"What on earth do you want to see her for?"

"I don't know," said Rebecca. "I think I should like her. There can not be much harm about her, or Jack Hartop would not love her as he does. He says that she has been wrecked three times, and that the Queen wrote her a letter. Why was she shipwrecked?"

"Because she shipped on board ships which happened to be wrecked."

"Hum!" said Rebecca. "But why did the Queen write to her?"

"Because she did her duty, as you are doing yours now."

"But tell me more," said Rebecca, eagerly.

"Let me know something of her; for I love her, and I can't tell why. What did she do that the Queen should have written to her. Tell me."

Dangerous work this. Two noble and enthusiastic souls, sitting close to one another, and telling of great and noble deeds. As for Morley, he had made up his mind long before. He was determined to marry Rebecca, and Hartop and Hetty knew it. As for Rebecca, she brought her fate on herself. "If she had desired her freedom she should not have sat on the sofa beside a very attractive dissenting minister, and have forced him to tell the tale of his daughter's heroism. All that happened to her was her own fault. But they will do it. Searching among rare old books the other day, I came across a very scarce play called *Othello, or the Moor of Venice*. In that play the Moor actually wins his Venetian beauty by telling travelers' taradiddles of the Sir John Mandeville type. Morley did not do this; he only told the plain truth about his daughter. But the telling of chivalrous adventures is a very successful way of courting. At least, the man Shakspeare thought so.

"I have no objection to tell you what Hetty did on that occasion," said Mr. Morley. "It may show you what a woman may be worth under certain circumstances." She had been up and down the North Devon coast so often that she could tell every headland in the darkest night. Well, one night, working up from Hayle against

a slow eastering wind and a heavy ebb tide, the wind shifted against the sun, and came from north-west a hurricane. The skipper put her head for Cardiff, but that *Bride* is the most thundering—I beg a thousand pardons; you must remember that I live among sailors."

"You did not say any thing?" said Rebecca.

"Well, I was very near doing it," said Morley. "My dear, that *Bride* is the most thundering idiot of a ship you ever saw. With even the N.W. sea she shipped enough water on board to put out her fires, and there she lay entirely without deck ports to let the water away, trusting to her scuppers, which were choked with deck lumber, close to a lee-shore, with the seas getting up from the Atlantic, nothing between you and Charleston, South Carolina, and the skipper utterly uncertain as to where he was. Do you understand this, my dear Rebecca?"

"Not a bit," she said. "You and Hetty must teach me."

"We will," said Morley. "My dear Hetty, finding her cabins flooded and the ship nearly water-logged, with fires out, and stokers and firemen on deck, naturally came on deck herself, bareheaded, with all her glorious beauty, wild in the storm; you know Hetty's beauty—no, by-the-by, you don't—but it is greater than your own, child. And in the terror of the tempest she asked the skipper where they were.

"And the skipper said, 'I think we have sea-room, Miss Morley; we are off the Bideford River, and we may get anchorage and ride it out. Can you see to leeward? Is it not so?'"

"But Hetty never answered one word. She peered to leeward through the fury of the tempest, and she came back to him with the message of death quite quietly.

"My dear Captain Jeffries, you are not off the Bideford River at all. Look there over the starboard bow. That black wall is Baggy Point. Think; can it be any thing else?"

"And the skipper put his hat on the deck and trampled on it.

"But Hetty said, 'I will go and get my women ready for death, for with this set of the tide we shall be on Morte Stone in ten minutes. Alas! I wish this was untrue.' And the skipper said, 'Is there nothing to be done?' And Hetty said, 'Yes. Make sail on her and put her ashore at Wollacombe.' 'With rising tide?' said the skipper. 'It is better than Morte Stone,' said Hetty.

"And he did it, my dear Rebecca. He made sail on her and put her helm up. And she burst heavily on shore, with the rising tide behind her, and the rapidly accumulating sea following her, and getting more furious each moment.

"It was a dim, dark winter's night, my dear, and there was no help to be had. One by one the sailors leaped into the long surf, and some were drowned and some escaped. Hetty got her women into the fore-castle, for the ship had gone stem on, and at last no one was left but the women and the skipper.

"The skipper was doubtful about the ship lasting out the tide; but Hetty pointed out to him that she, although a *beast*, was strongly built. To the women under her care she pointed out the fact that in three hours they would walk on shore. And as she was telling them this the ship, by the rising of the tide, shifted

broadside on, with a sickening, thumping lurch, and the sea, which hitherto had only been beating over the poop, burst in its rising anger over the whole ship.

"And all the women, young and old, huddled round my beautiful daughter, crying to her to save them. And she, believing that the end had actually come, quieted them by prayer."

A pause.

"You say they were saved. Oh yes! they were saved. The captain and the women walked ashore the next morning and went to Ilfracombe. But the Queen wrote to Hetty, and that is what she wrote about."

Dangerous talk this, or the rare play of *Othello* errs.

Mr. Morley came very often indeed now, and his gentle, kindly ministrations had some good effect on Mr. Turner. Morley took the line with him that he had devoted his life to what he thought the right, and that if he had erred it was only in searching after a nearly impossible excellence. This was in the main true, and it comforted Turner exceedingly. The effect on Turner was not so satisfactory as Mr. Morley could have desired. He suddenly developed a vainglorious, boastful mood, and would talk by the hour, to Rebecca in particular, on his virtuous and blameless life; would compare his life to the lives of all the other men he knew, very much to his own advantage. In fact, the poor man's brain was upset by anxiety, and he had got into that frame of thought which consists in persistently stating one's case against destiny, proceeds into an active contemplation of self, and ends in Bedlam. Morley saw this after a time, and counteracted it as well as he was able. On the whole, however, he did Turner much good, and made life easier for Rebecca.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUDDEN SURPRISE.

ONE Saturday night her father was in a very silent, thoughtful mood, and would not speak at all, but sat brooding, and now and then would kneel down and pray—to poor Rebecca's great discomfiture. How many bitter tears she shed that night who can tell? She saw that he was not angry with her; for even when he sat by the half-hour together, looking steadily at her, his look was not unkind. This little fact saved her from hysterics; for, to an exceedingly sensitive nature like hers, the fact of having a stern old man sitting perfectly silent before her, hour after hour, and staring at her with intervals of prayer, was nearly too much. She was relieved when he took his candle and prepared to go to bed.

"Rebecca," he said, "I desire that you will be ready for Mr. Morley to-morrow morning by the first boat."

"What does he want with me?"

"I do not know; but you will have the goodness to go with him. Good-night." And he went.

It would be very difficult to say what Rebecca's thoughts were that night. They were, one would fancy, not very profound. She had tact enough to see that Mr. Morley would, most probably, ask her no question requiring any immediate answer;

yet he might. Long before morning dawned she had thought it all through, and had come to the resolution that if on this occasion, or on any other, Mr. Morley chose to put a certain question to her, that he would have a most decided and emphatic answer; an answer which would prevent his ever repeating his question. "For we do love him, Mab, don't we?" she said to her little dog. "The only question is, what does he think of us?"

She had breakfast ready for him, and was nicely dressed when he came. "Well, Mr. Morley," she said, "and so I am to have a Sunday out with you? If you are pleased, I am sure I am. This is very kind and considerate of you, indeed. Where are we going?"

"I was going to ask you to come down to Limehouse with me."

"I am dressed, ready to go where you will. Now we will start, or you will be late for your service."

Morley rose and leaned against the chimney-piece, and Rebecca stood before him. The man had resolved the night before to examine her character more closely, in times of trial, for another six months. He had resolved that he would see her under every form of temptation before he committed himself irrevocably; he had determined that he would see how far he could mould her character—had made a hundred priggish resolutions. But as she stood before him at that moment she looked so grand, so noble, and withal so good, that his resolutions all went to the wind; and, like a true man as he was, he spoke his mind.

"Rebecca, child, I love you more than all the world besides."

She only flushed up and stood quite still. She was as utterly unprepared for this as he was himself. She hardly thought it would come at all; still less on this day; still less at the beginning. But these accidents happen, and Rebecca, although prepared with her answer, could not give it from sheer surprise.

"Are you angry with me? Is there another?" he said. And she quickly found her tongue—"Oh no, no! no other. Please try to love me, Mr. Morley, and I will do my very best."

And so they kissed one another and jogged out to the steamboat arm in arm, with no further words which would assist the telling of this story; and it was all over and done, for ever and ever, a great deal sooner than either of them dreamed of. And men of the world have informed me that this is frequently the case. "If a man and a woman," said one of them, sententially, "have made up their minds to make fools of themselves, they no more know at what particular time they will do it any more than you or I do. They, however, always do it before they mean to."

They jogged out arm in arm down the lane in the most sedate manner conceivable. But you can not keep that sort of thing quiet; it will show itself. Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin were taking the refreshment of shag tobacco, out of the style of pipe which they called "long churchwardens," when Mr. Morley and Rebecca passed. They saw what had happened directly. Mr. Akin said:

"She's took him."

Mr. Spicer said, "He has got her, hard and fast."

"He is a Methody, ain't he?" said Mr. Akin.

"Oh!" said Mr. Spicer, "but he is a sailor Methody. Why, that man," he went on, pointing after the disappearing Mr. Morley with his pipe-stem, "has been a-burst-ed up, with shipwrecks, and earthquakes, and gales of wind, more than any skipper as sails upon the sea. He has got a good 'un, and she has got a good 'un. There is her little dog a-coming out, Jim, a-trying to fol-ler; send her back. Hish back, little dog. Hish back, little pretty pet."

But Jim Akin, having secured Mab, with that intense love of a highly-bred dog which seems almost ingrained in the Londoner's nature, possessed himself of Mab's person, and made her take breakfast on a chair among his children. Mab, as great a radical as her mistress, enjoyed this extremely, and was, in fact, not taken back till just before chapel-time; by which time our two friends were landing far down the river.

The steamer was nearly empty, for it was very early, and they sat alone and talked.

"When did you think of this first, my beloved?" said Morley.

"Only very lately. I am utterly taken by surprise."

"And I also. I never dreamed of speaking so soon. My own, I have no home to offer you. I am bound for the sea."

"And I must stay by father," she said. "So that happens well."

"Then will you wait, Rebecca?"

"Wait for what?"

"To be married."

"Of course I will wait, any time. I have got your heart; I care for nothing more."

"Now I am going to say something which will offend you," said Mr. Morley.

"I think not," said Rebecca; "but say it."

"All this has been talked over, time after time, between Hetty, Jack Hartop, and I."

"No, really! Well, I am very glad of that. Does Hetty think she will like me, dear?"

"You shall find out that for yourself."

"I am content. Alfred, this is the first day I have ever felt peace in my whole life. When may I know Hetty?"

"When she comes back from America, perhaps."

"Only perhaps. Are you going to America, Alfred?"

"I am going farther than what one generally calls America. I have failed here to a certain extent. I am only popular among sailors, and sailors come and go; and the regular connection at Limehouse dislike me for preaching pure moralisms, and for consorting with the men of the Establishment. They are right. But I am a scholar and a gentleman, and it is a sore temptation for me to mix with the men of the Establishment, who are, some of them, scholars and gentlemen. And as for preaching moralisms, what can one preach else, when the heart is sick? And, again, Hetty, my darling Hetty, is a standing scandal to a certain set, the rich set, down there; and so I am going abroad; and I have no home to give you."

"But," said Rebecca, "if you have power among the sailors they should keep you."

"Well, you see your brother-in-law, Hagbut, has gone so terribly against Hetty. And he is all-powerful there."

"I will ask no more about Hetty," said Rebecca, laughing, "because I sha'n't be told. But all dissenters are not so narrow as these?"

"Bless you, no. It is only our little connection, fighting for sheer existence, which is so narrow. Any one of the larger sects would welcome me—ay, and Hetty with me."

"And you could not join them?"

"No," said Morley. "Theoretically, our people are the only pure Christians. Practically, from ignorance, vanity, and stupidity, we are the weakest of all sects. But I am no turn-coat."

"Where thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," murmured Rebecca. And so they went on their Sabbath-day's journey,

Until the forward creeping tides
Began to foam and they to draw,
From deep to deep to where they saw
The great ships lift their shining sides.

And Mr. Morley said, "This is Limehouse. Do you think you shall like it?"

"I'll see," said Rebecca, as they went on shore.

He was very anxious to know, for he had his plans; but he did not press her, but waited anxiously, for Limehouse is not at all an attractive place. Rebecca's first impressions of it were, that it was very dirty; that it smelt of tar and coals; that the ladies of Limehouse did not do their hair at their first toilet, or levee, and that they stood in the middle of the street, with their arms crossed, and stopped talking to stare at her. That there were too many bare-armed ladies leaning out of upper windows, who talked to one another across the street, and had the same disconcerting habit of being perfectly and suddenly dumb, as she and Mr. Morley went by. Likewise the gentlemen, although evidently sailors, were by no means sailors of the Hartop type, being far less deferential and far more ostentatious in the admiration of her beauty than was at all desirable; and, moreover, she could not disguise from herself that but a few of these gentlemen were exactly sober, though only one was drunk—a Norwegian skipper, a short, stout man, with a great blonde curling beard down over his broad chest, who had been making a night of it, and was bent on making a day of it, but who was being taken to his ship by a select committee or caucus of experienced toppers, and whose reiterated argument was that his ship lay off the back-door of every public house which he passed. This was strange, and not very agreeable, to Rebecca, and she still withheld her opinion.

But, when they went further, she began to alter her opinion, and, in fact, changed it altogether.

On the edge of the brimming river they came on a quiet, peaceful row of houses. These houses partly faced the river one way, and on the other a dock, in which ships, small ones it is true, but still real ships which had fought the great ocean, with their yard-arms against the windows of the houses.

They came along this dock in approaching the river, and Rebecca looked down on the decks of the ships, and began wondering how those dull inert masses must look at the mercy of all the fury of wind and sea combined against them. There was no sign of the great sea struggle on them now; only a waste of coiled ropes on deck, and cobweb-like rigging aloft. On one of them

was a boy, a coal-boy, in a blue jersey. He, in the surrounding silence and peace, was remarkable. On board another was another boy (washed, this one), who played with the skipper's dog: this boy was an event; on another was the skipper's boy climbing up a high ladder to shore with the Sunday's dinner of neck-of-mutton, with potatoes under it, and a solitary onion atop, balanced on his head, going to the baker's, while, from below, the skipper's wife, baby on arm, watched him breathlessly.

"I shall like this place very much indeed," she said, emphatically and suddenly.

"That is well," said Morley.

"Do you know these people?" asked Rebecca.

Morley stood still until the boy with the potatoes and mutton had effected his dangerous landing on that iron-bound coast, and continued to look down on to the deck of the ship. After a time the skipper's wife's eye, being diverted from the very dangerous landing of that bold young mariner, the apprentice, rested on Mr. Morley. Whereupon she danced the baby, and "hailed" Mr. Morley in that peculiar yell with which the wives of coasting skippers hail the wives of other coasting skippers, their gossips, on the high sea. C in alto staccato, I suppose, not being musical myself, notes inaudible to the male ear on the waste of waters, but perfectly audible in dock to a priest as well used to sailors' wives as Mr. Morley. While Rebecca was reading on the stern of the vessel, *Jane*, Ilfracombe, she heard the following dialogue:

"My dear, tender heart, how be ye?"

"All well here, Mrs. Camp?"

"He has a-gone to chapel, my dear," said Mrs. Camp, "and he is a-going to stay. So nice and kind he is. And I'm coming if the boy is back in time; but I can't leave the ship."

"Listen to me," said Morley, in a strangely emphatic voice. "Have you any fire on board?"

"No," said Mrs. Camp, coming close under him, and speaking eagerly.

"Then, if the boy don't come back, leave the ship and come and communicate. Remember, it may be the last chance either of you will have to communicate together forever. Come and kneel with him. There will be an empty place in his heart some day, maybe, if you do not."

The woman said "Wait," and went into the cabin, and in a moment had reappeared with a bonnet on, not clean, and a gray shawl over her shoulders (for these people were not rich), and her baby on her arm. "Now," she said, "minister, I am ready. God bless you for pointing it out."

And they three walked away together. And Rebecca took all these things and hid them in her heart.

Now baby had not occurred as a difficulty to Rebecca, but Mrs. Camp had provided for baby, and was going to leave him on the way with one Mrs. Tryon, widow of a deceased warrant officer, R.N., who lived on his pension, and on the letting of lodgings to dissenting skippers. She was the most terrible tartar in that peaceful waterside community, and the most difficult to manage. "No one," said the dwellers in Rope-walk Terrace, "could get to the windward of Mrs. Tryon, save Mr. Morley, and a sailor's wife in distress."

Now it so happened, in the everlasting fitness of things, that Captain Moriarty, of Waterford, a Papist, had run his schooner, the *Ninety-eight*, in on the tide opposite her house, and had then incontinently gone ashore and amused himself. And that schooner, finding herself deserted by the tide, with no hawsers laid out to larboard, had, in an idiotic and beery way, heeled over and poked her foretopsail-yard through Mrs. Tryon's best parlor-window, to the destruction of property. If it had been a Protestant ship she would not have cared; but a Papist ship—the *Ninety-eight* (she was old enough to remember Hoche), was too much. The damage to property was small; but if a staunch dissenting Protestant woman's windows were to be broken by the yard-arm of a Papist ship, why then—So she had laid in wait for Captain Moriarty.

Captain Moriarty had kept away like a good sailor and a dextrous Irishman, till he supposed she had started for chapel. But it was no good. As Mr. Morley and Rebecca came up they were hard at it. Both Mr. Moriarty and Mrs. Tryon were sincerely religious in their very various ways; and Mrs. Tryon, knowing this well, exercised him principally on religious grounds, until he was half crazy with anger.

"That is what the old fool at Rome tells you to do, is it? To break into widows' houses with your foretopsail-yard, and for a pretense make long prayers. Oh, yours is a precious religion, yours is!"

"You insult my religion, Mrs. Tryon," said the Irishman; "I never insulted yours. It was an accident, and I am very sorry."

"Accident!" said Mrs. Tryon. "Why, if my poor man that is gone had come home the worse for drink, and had moored his ship as you have moored yours, me and my gal would have gone out in the dead of the darkest night, and have taken the hawsers to larboard ourselves. Bah!"

By this moment our party had arrived, and had heard what had been said. There was no need for any interference on the part of Mr. Morley, for Mrs. Camp stepped up to Mrs. Tryon with baby, and said:

"My dear, mind baby for me. I want to go to chapel with Mr. Morley, and take Sacrament with my old man. For we are going to the old Camerons, on the West Coast, and we shall never come back no more, I doubt."

Hard-featured Mrs. Tryon flushed up. "Here, Keziah," she said to her maid, "take this baby; I am going to chapel. Moriarty, don't mind my tongue, for you are a good man; mind your larboard hawsers."

And so they all went together. And Rebecca said, as they went, "I think I shall like this place very much indeed."

When they came out from chapel there was a brimming flood-tide under a bright sun, with the ships passing upward under a good brisk wind from the free happy sea beyond.

"How far is it to the sea, Alfred?" asked Rebecca, in a whisper, for the congregation was still round them.

"Fifty miles."

"We shall sail on it together one day, sha'n't we, with Hetty and Hartop?"

"I hope so," said Mr. Morley, quietly; "but

much must happen first. I must provide a home."

"Yes. I do not mean that," said Rebecca; "I was only thinking of your sermon. Why did you take such a text on such a happy day as this, and preach only of the cruelty of the sea? Such a wild, strange text—'The burden of the desert of the sea.'"

"I only wished to check your fanciful love for it, Rebecca. A day will come when you will not love it as well as you do now."

And Rebecca said only, "Well, the present is with us, and I am very happy."

"I want to ask you, Rebecca, if you have any objection to my telling what has happened between us two to a few intimate friends?"

"I have none at all, Alfred, if you think it right. I am very proud of it, I assure you."

I, for my part, don't think that there was much necessity for any announcement at all. The whole congregation might run and read, and in fact did so. When they saw their very handsome and eminently marriageable minister with a beautiful young lady on his arm, to whom he talked in whispers, they formed their own conclusions, and generally "overhauled" her (we are in a nautical neighborhood), at their one o'clock dinner, some saying she was too fine for him, but the most of them thinking that she would do, but that her beauty put them too strongly in mind of that poor Mrs. Hartop; they hoped that he might have better luck with his wife than he had had with his daughter, but generally acquiesced in what did not in the least concern them, and wished their good minister well. Two young ladies seceded for a week or so, and met one another at various chapels in the neighborhood for a few Sundays; but even they got over it in time. The "minister's wooing" was a patent thing to all.

But here were the minister and his sweetheart (we have no better word than that dear old English one, except that abominable French one, *fiancée*!) on the breezy quay, with all the congregation gone except a very few, dreaming and whispering. They were aroused by the emphatic voice of Mrs. Tryon, a woman given to management from her youth upward, who said: "Where do you take your dinner to-day, minister?"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Morley, with a start, "I had not thought about that."

"No one ever believed that you had," said Mrs. Tryon. "But here are Captain and Mrs. Camp, making an extraordinary proposal."

And, indeed, there was no one on the wharf but Mrs. Tryon and Mr. and Mrs. Camp, when Mr. Morley turned round to speak to them.

"My dear friends," he said, "I want to tell you something. This young lady has promised to be my wife."

"So I should have supposed," said Mrs. Tryon, the irrepressible. "And a lucky woman, too, if she only knows it. Well, my dear, I wish you all joy and happiness. There's no such good husbands in the world as sailors, my dear. And he is a sailor, true blue every inch of him! But what do you say to this ridiculous proposal of Captain and Mrs. Camp?"

Captain Camp stood meekly behind his wife and pushed her forward, prompting her in whis-

pers from behind his hand; and Mrs. Camp did the talking.

"Mr. Morley, me and my old man thought that you being a real sailor, and having made no arrangements for dinner, and Mrs. Tryon's windows being broke in—"

"By the yard-arm of a Papist foretop-sail schooner," interposed Mrs. Tryon, with emphasis.

"Quite so, thank you," said Mrs. Camp, turning to Mrs. Tryon gratefully, as if from the stores of Mrs. Tryon's wisdom she had been assisted with an additional argument which had previously escaped her. "Mrs. Tryon's house being broke into by Captain Moriarty, a dear loved friend, I am sure, but incautious; we thought that perhaps—seeing that we're for the Cameroons, and might never come back—that you would have your dinner aboard. But the young lady. Miss, I humbly wish you every joy; but I doubt it wouldn't do for you, Miss."

"Please let me go, Alfred. Do let me go," said Rebecca, eagerly. Whereupon Captain Camp came forward, and Rebecca looked at him.

A splendid young sailor, truly, but not of the Hartop type. Very blonde, with a golden beard, cool, deliberate, but wanting vitality; a man who is apt to knock under on a bad coast, an anxious man, who kills himself by worrying about his responsibilities, when coarser natures, often culpably careless, lose their ships and make such a good sailor-like show before the Board that they keep their certificates, while men like Captain Camp have theirs suspended. This young man said to them very quietly:

"If it was possible, Mr. Morley, that you could dine with us it would give us great pleasure. If this lady is to be a true wife to you, and if you are the same man as ever, she will fare rougher than she will to-day. Our last voyage was to Levant, Miss; and we can give you pretty and delicate things to eat, which you could scarcely buy in shops."

"Please let me go, Alfred!"

"My dear, I am not preventing you. I should like you to go. Only I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought. I am very hungry, and Mrs. Camp's mutton must be on its way home, so we had better get on board ship as soon as possible."

"You will do, my dear," said Mrs. Tryon. "Camp, you had better start your boy up to my place for some knives and forks and things. You shall have my place with your back against the mizzen-mast."

"Are you coming?" said Rebecca, as they walked. "I am glad of that."

"Are you, my dear? well, that is good hearing, for it is few like me. As for coming, I make it a rule never to dine ashore on Sundays—Rabbit the man, he will never be quiet in his grave till he has had my house down!"

This last exclamation was tortured out of her as they rounded the corner and had come in sight of her own house, and the reason of it was this: the schooner *Ninety-eight* had righted with the rising tide, and, in so righting herself, pulled away the whole of Mrs. Tryon's veranda. It was really a serious disaster in a small way, and Mrs. Camp dreaded a terrible storm. She took Mrs. Tryon the terrible by the arm, and said:

"Don't be angry with him, dear; he is only an Irishman. Think where we have been together to-day, and don't be angry with him, he is such a good fellow."

"I won't be angry with him, my dear," said Mrs. Tryon. "But I will have it out of his owners if there is a law in the land."

"And then the Board will stop his certificate," said Mrs. Camp. "Don't ee say any thing, don't ee. He was so kind to us, when my man got his ship ashore at Fayal. Don't ee say any thing. Minister, ask her not to quarrel with him."

"I will take no steps at all," said Mrs. Tryon, "further than asking him to moor his ship opposite some other widow's house. But how has he managed to do it? My old man used to say, when talking of gunnery, that the angle of incidence was equal to the angle of reflection. So I should have supposed that when he had once poked his yard-arm through my window, he could have taken it out again, without pulling half the wall down. I see, this is your Irish seamanship."

Captain Moriarty was straight in their way, and it was unavoidable that there should be an interchange of broadsides. They were all a little nervous, as the frigate Tryon ranged alongside the frigate Moriarty. Moriarty prepared to fire.

Mrs. Tryon delivered her broadside and passed on, leaving Moriarty in a state of collapse.

"Seas and tidal waters," she said, "are free to all nations, in times of peace. At the same time, Captain Moriarty, the next time it pleases you to knock a Protestant widow's house about her ears, I would trouble you to remember, that it is better seamanship, according to English Protestant lights, to let a ship right as she went over, and not to alter her angle by useless haw-ers. Likewise, if you had let go your larboard tacks and sheets, your yard-arm would have come out of my parlor without carrying away the veranda. Whereas, there they are all taut now to shame you, as taut as any standing rigging. Have you navigated Mrs. Camp's baby to death, or has it escaped?"

No, Mrs. Camp's baby was waiting for them opposite Captain Camp's ship. Keziah had made it ill with Ipecacuanha lozenges, but babies generally are ill, as far as I have ever observed, and so it did not much matter. Not only the baby was here, but the boy, arriving from the baker's, with the mutton on his head, and going across the ladder (for it was now high tide) before them, without apology, feeling himself master of the situation. In less than three minutes Rebecca found herself, with her back to the mizzenmast, in a rather small cabin, eating baked mutton and potatoes—and liking it too.

"I hope you like your dinner, Miss Turner?" said Mrs. Camp, anxiously.

"I like it very much," said Rebecca. "And I like the place I eat it in, and I like the people I eat it with."

"So you can make *your* mind easy, Mrs. Camp," struck in Mrs. Tryon. And to Rebecca, "I knew you were one of us, my dear, the first moment I set eyes on you."

"I'll do my best," said Rebecca. "If people will be kind to me, I will do any thing. But I am foolish. If any one is unkind to me, I will

sit moping and dull, without any power of action, for days and days."

"That's bad," said Mrs. Tryon; "but it is better than flying out and saying things you never meant, and which you can't recall. If a man don't love a woman, her hard words are nothing. If he does, her words mean more than she thought, and he wants time to forget them, and don't always do that. And a man's hard words to a woman are worse, because a woman can't ship for a voyage as a man can, and come home like a bridegroom. As for me, I only speak of what I have seen in others, for I have had no experience myself."

"You were married a long time, Mrs. Tryon?" said Rebecca.

"Yes, but me and my old man never had words. We both had tempers, and so, knowing that, we kept them. And he was a good husband to me; and the parting was bitter. With the Sacrament in my mouth, I should not bear ill-will; but it was that African squadron killed him, and so I bear ill-will to the Cameroons. It didn't much matter. Our minister has assurance that we shall meet again. And then all doubts will be cleared up, and old love revived (as if it wanted reviving), and we shall go on hand in hand through eternity. Therefore, Miss Turner, what does such a trifling parting as ours matter?"

"Then we shall meet our loved ones again?" said Rebecca.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Tryon: "unless the Book lies, I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." I think that finishes the argument, Miss, if there were any. Piff."

The gentle Mrs. Camp changed the conversation by arriving, after a short absence with her husband, laden with quaint boxes and quainter bottles, the spoils of the East.

"We sailed to Levant last voyage, Miss," she said, "and we brought these things home, for friends. And if Mr. Morley and his sweet-heart (I know no better word, Miss Turner) are not friends, who are? Here are figs from Syra, better than you can buy, and here are the little grapes, from Xante (you call them currants), which I laid in sugar by my own hand, just before baby was born. You don't take wine, I doubt; but take a little to-day, for our sakes; this is some that my old man bought at St. Lucar, Spanish wine, strong, but very good. Do be hospitable, my dear young lady, with a Devonshire woman, and drink a little drop of wine with us."

Rebecca consented most willingly, and indeed the wine was most admirable wine, like port, a wine not got in this country.

"You find this cabin close now," said Mrs. Camp, as soon as the boy, who had waited perfectly, as he waited from good-will, had been sent to his dinner, and baby was established on his throne. "You would feel baked in such a little cabin as this."

"It is the nicest place I have ever been in," said Rebecca. "I suppose it is different in a gale of wind at sea?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Camp, "I have been through it all more than once, with the old man, in this cabin. This ain't our first baby, Miss Turner. Our first was drowned down there, under that locker, behind you, when I lay drowned, and nigh dead on this very place, with my head cut open."

"Well, we don't want to hear about that," said Mrs. Tryon. "Sailors' wives have their trials, and you have had yours. Similarly I have had mine. Similarly Miss Turner will have hers. Why, my boy was eighteen when he sailed for the West Coast, and never came home again. Therefore, what are your troubles to mine?"

"That is very true, Mrs. Tryon," said the humble Mrs. Camp; "and I am wicked to think of my little troubles, in any way. But I think I am sentimental to-day; and that is what a sailor's wife should never be. I suppose it is because I went to Sacrament with the old man for the last time."

"What do you mean by the last time?" said Mrs. Tryon, sternly.

"I didn't mean any harm," said Mrs. Camp. "But we are going to the West Coast."

"Better folks than you have been to the West Coast and come back again," said Mrs. Tryon. "Don't cry out before you are hurt. The *Cleopatra* has only lost ten hands in eighteen months. Of course, if you, in your lazy, merchant way, choose to moor in a mangrove swamp, you will all die. Veer out a couple of cables, and lie well off shore, out of the land-fog, as her Majesty's ships do, and you will come to no harm at all. If you sneak into fever holds you will have fever. Mr. Morley, I am going to chapel."

Mr. Morley, who had been having a quiet conversation at the end of the table with Mr. Camp, asked Rebecca if she was inclined to go; but told Mrs. Camp that he was not going to chapel, but had provided for his duty.

"Then why not stay longer with us?" said Captain Camp. "We shall never see you again."

"She and I have much to speak of, as you may understand," said Mr. Morley. "I only said the words to her this morning."

"You have a prize," said Captain Camp.

"Yes, indeed," said Morley. "I have known her, and watched her for long."

"What does Hetty think of her?" said Captain Camp.

"She has never seen her; and Rebecca knows nothing of Hetty. Jack Hartop is the only one of our local connection who has ever seen her."

"But, my dear minister, is this concealment wise?"

"Hagbut hates Hetty so; and he is all-powerful."

"That is true. Well, Miss Rebecca is a trump, at all events. Good-by."

And Mr. Morley and Rebecca crossed the ladder, and stood again on the wharf. The afternoon had become wild and rainy, and the tide was going down; and Mr. Moriarty's ship's maintop-sail-yard was (through Mr. Moriarty's careless arrangement of hawsers) rapidly approaching Mrs. Tryon's bedroom window. Mrs. Tryon had resigned herself to this fresh desecration of her hearth-stone, and gone to chapel: the Camps had got ready for a sailors' dawdle among the ships. But our two set their heads westward, knowing that their end for the present was Walham Green.

"Could you get on with such people as those, Rebecca?" said he. "If I was long away, could you live with them?"

"I could live and die with them," said Rebecca. "Those people are alive, ours are dead. Is the sea so cruel as they tell us, dear?"

"The sea is very cruel. The world is cruel, also. Come, *you* have seen that."

"I shall have to wait for you?"

"Yes."

"I wish I could wait for you there. Mrs. Tryon is better than Miss Soper; and I do so dearly like those Camps."

"You will hardly see much of them," said Mr. Morley; "they are bound on a long voyage."

Ay, indeed, they were. An old, old story, read in the papers every day; but a wearisome one to tell, from sheer reiteration. The Camps sailed away on ebb-tide, a week after this, with their baby, and their apprentice, and five hands all told. And they sailed westward, before the east wind of late March; and they sailed away into the golden west of early spring, and nothing was ever heard of them from that day to this. Nothing will ever be heard of them until the sea gives up her dead. They had taken the Sacrament together for the last time on earth.

To Rebecca they had been like a bright gleam of sunshine, on the happiest, most April-like day of her whole life. In the times soon to come, when she was all alone, watching a dying life, behind windows which quivered and rattled in the furious blast, she would hear the cry of sailors mooring their ship. And she, in that vague, foolish superstition, of which those who have watched long by the beds of the dying can tell you, would slip down silently, saying "That is Camp's ship." But it never was Camp's ship, and it never will be; for Camp's ship, wife, baby, boy, and all her crew, are at the bottom of the blue, wandering sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME AGAIN.

REBECCA got home soon after afternoon chapel, and Mr. Morley left her at the door. She was very quiet and cool over what had happened, not seeing any great reason why she should be otherwise. Mr. Morley had bidden her tell her father at once, and she went up stairs to do so very quietly.

He was sitting alone, with the little dog on his knee, reading the "Pilgrim's Progress." His mind was perfectly quiet and unclouded this day, and he brightened up when he saw his handsome daughter before him. The little dog wriggled and scolded in his lap to get at her, and Mr. Turner put her down and smiled when she ran to Rebecca.

"My dear father, I hope you have not been dull?"

"No, daughter. I have been very happy. I was at the Communion with you in spirit; and I was glad to think that you were in pleasant, goodly company. Come and tell me where you have been."

"Please, pa," said Rebecca, kneeling at his feet, "I want to tell you something very particular indeed. Mr. Morley has asked me to marry him, and I have said that I would, if you would let me. And you will let me, won't you?"

"I am very glad of this," said Mr. Turner;

"this is the only wish I had in this world, I think. I am very glad, my dear; God bless you. Try to be worthy of him."

"I will, father, indeed."

"I doubt you will be very poor," said Mr. Turner, as soon as Rebecca was seated. "You will have about £120 a year—he will never have any thing to speak of. He is not a drawing man, to any except the poor. But I don't see why you should not be happy. I'll tie your money up, and you shall have it when you marry. Four thousand pounds is all I can guarantee you. There may be a little more; but I can't tell. Hagbut is a near man."

"I was not thinking of money, father," said Rebecca.

"It would be extreme indecent if you were," said Mr. Turner; "but I was. I have secured you from actual poverty, and Hagbut is hard and near; and I gave my word to certain things with regard to Carry, or we should have had her on our hands forever and a day; and my word is as good as my bond. Beyond this four thousand pounds I can only give you Hobson Bay scrip, which may be worth something or nothing, but which has escaped that man's ferret-eyes. You won't starve, Rebecca."

"Pa, don't talk about money to-day."

"Well, I won't. Get me my tea."

She soon did that, and made him comfortable before the fire. "Come," he said, "don't take all the good things to yourself; give me the little dog," and Mab, a black peaked nose and hair, was handed reluctantly to him by Rebecca.

Mab had a great idea of Mr. Turner, considering him in the light of an idol or fetish, requiring continual propitiation and flattery. So she scuffled over his waistcoat, licked his face, and only desisted from her cultus of him when he gave her a little slap, after which she was quiet. Rebecca thought that she had seen the same sort of thing before in certain chapels; and indeed one may see the same in certain churches also.

"Pa," she said, when Mab was quiet, "tell me all about the Establishment."

"I don't know much about it. Is he going to join it?"

"Lor, no! He would die sooner. Only I wanted to know."

"Well, the Establishment is the gentleman's church. Never mind the Establishment. You listen to me, girl, and never you mind the Established Church."

"I was only talking to amuse you, Sir; and I will trouble you to remember that I have taken brevet rank, that I am engaged to Mr. Morley. So no airs."

They were but silly words, but they were said so prettily that Turner himself laughed for a moment. "Come, girl," he said, "you are happy to-day, and indeed, old Rebecca, I am happy in your happiness. I assure you that I am; but I am in trouble after trouble. Are you going to him at once, for I am sore bested, and I want you at home?"

"My dear father, he has asked me to wait a very long time, and I have told him that I could not leave you, and that *he* must wait a very long time."

"That is good," said Mr. Turner; "that is very good. Listen carefully to me, for my mind is unclouded to-night, and it may be clouded

again to-morrow; for I have had a hard life of it, child. I have never had a day's holiday; and your mother—well, never mind her, poor dear, you have made it square between us—and my head goes at times; listen now, and be mute."

Rebecca listened intently.

"You have heard of the great house of Gorham-bury & Co. (limited, in all ways save an unlimited smash)?"

Rebecca nodded.

"Well, they are hopelessly smashed for two millions and a half of money. They have been bankrupt for a long while; and their last effort was to get our cousin Ducetoy's title-deeds, and lease money on them, by which he would have been brought into the bankruptcy. His father had meddled and muddled with them in the old times, before they were a Company; and they thought they could connect him with the Company. I have saved him—utterly illegally."

"But he is nothing to us."

"He was your mother's cousin, and I owe her reparation," he said, gloomily; "I have papers which would tell one way, I don't say which. But they dare not ask for them."

"You mean papers which would involve Lord Ducetoy?"

"Yes, and I am acting illegally in withholding them."

"Then why do you withhold them?" asked Rebecca. "Be sure it is best to follow the law."

"I don't know that," said Mr. Turner; "I have seen too much of law. These papers, if produced, would put Lord Ducetoy's property into the bankruptcy."

"But the creditors," said Rebecca, aghast; "the poor souls who have invested their money—have you no pity for them?"

"They would take any advantage of the Company, and they must take their chance."

"But, pa, wrong can't make right. I am sorry for Lord Ducetoy, but for Heaven's sake restore these papers."

"I can't," said Mr. Turner.

"Nonsense. Why not?" asked Rebecca.

"Because I have *burned* them," said Mr. Turner. "Now as you have your father's character, and in consequence his life in your hands, I wish to point out another little matter, more in your way of business."

Rebecca, sitting pale and calm, was dumb from that moment and forever about her father's felony. But their relations from this moment were altered, never to be replaced on their former footing.

She never showed this fact to him, but he knew it, and acted on it. He was deferential to her after this. Sometimes he was insolent to her, but very seldom, and for a very short time; he was generally easy and almost jocular with her, but from this moment she was in a way mistress of the situation.

She had now entered into a community of guilt with her father. That her father's motives were of the highest order was certain, but still her father might be a convict to-morrow.

What was the effect of this singular community of fault between them? A strange one to ordinary eyes. A love which had never existed before. If pity, combined with admiration and fear for the object, does not produce love, what does? Again, if admiration and trust do not

produce love, what again does? These two hearts were together now.

But I must return to the original conversation. Rebecca said, "But these documents will be demanded of you, pa!"

"No, they won't, my dear. I have too many forgeries, those of my own name among others, by Sir Gorhambury and Captain Gorhambury, for them ever to look for them. Our danger does not lie here."

"Where does it lie then, father?" said Rebecca.

"In this," said Mr. Turner; "they will try to get into the house, and murder me to get at their own forgeries. So don't leave me, girl, and let the little dog sleep with me."

And so he went to bed. And Rebecca spent the first evening of her engagement in brooding over the fire, alone and terrified.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THALATTA.

THE very next afternoon Mr. Morley called, and was told by the little maid that Miss Turner was too ill to see him, but she gave him a note, which he, as is usual in such cases, opened and read:

"DEAR SIR,—Let yesterday be as though it never had been. Forget it, and forget me. It was all a mistake from beginning to end. I should like to have seen Hetty; but that can never be. My love for you is unalterable. I never loved any one on earth as I do you. But what we talked of yesterday is utterly and entirely impossible. REBECCA."

Morley stepped into Mr. Turner's study, and taking pen and ink, wrote:

"Come down stairs directly, and tell me all about it. Don't keep me waiting, for I have news for you, and but little time to give you. Look sharp, and don't dawdle. A. M."

So she came down. She was very pale, but there was no sign of wildness about her. He was shocked at her appearance, but he did not show it at all. He received her affectionately and kissed her.

"My dear Rebecca," he said, "can you explain to me the meaning of the note you sent me down just now?"

"No, Alfred," she said; "an explanation would involve others."

"So I have supposed for a very long time," he answered. "I have quite expected to hear of something like this for a year past. But that note I got this morning from you was never written. It don't exist."

"I am no fit wife for you," said Rebecca.

"I am surely the best judge of that. You are held to your words, Rebecca. Have you repented of that silly note? Can not you trust me, as I am going to trust you?"

"If you knew all, Alfred!"

"Bah! sweet-heart; I know more than all. Do you think that your sister knows nothing? Do you think that Hagbut has not got it out of her? Do you not think that Russel and Soper have not heard of it from him, and illustrated it?

My story is, that your father has raised money on Lord Ducetoy's title-deeds to pay Carry's marriage-portion."

"You never dared believe it of him?" said Rebecca.

"Not for one instant," said Mr. Morley, laughing; "only, this being the report about him in our little society, I asked his daughter to marry me. There is very little time to talk nonsense, my dear; let us therefore talk sense. If your father's affairs got utterly wrong, what earthly difference would it make between us? And under any circumstances, you know," he went on, laughing louder, "you can never be the plague and disgrace to me that Hetty has been."

Whenever he mentioned Hetty a smile came on his face, and a brightness in his eye. What had Rebecca to say to such wooing? Why, nothing.

"I repent. I am all yours. I will never distrust you again."

"Bravely said. Now I am going utterly away from you, to leave you entirely alone, without one solitary friend, for a long time. I have no hopes in England; my chapel is only full of sailors, and sailors do not pay. But our connection has given me the new Tahiti mission, wisely and well, for at Tahiti every one can manage the natives, but no one the sailors. Another man was appointed, but has got a good chapel and has refused. They offered it to me this morning, and it came to me like a gleam of light, pretty bird, that my work for my Master lay among the sailors, and I said yes."

"I see," said Rebecca, nodding her head and smiling; "this is good."

"I am half a sailor myself, you know, and I can talk to our wild boys in their own language without affectation and without mistake, which is a great thing; for men dislike following a man who exhibits ignorance on their own *specialité*. They say, he talks seamanship, and makes errors which the cook's mate would be ashamed of; how can we trust him in other things? It is silly and illogical on their parts; but they are silly and illogical. For my part, I think the priest who simply confesses ignorance, and applies to them for instruction, will have a good chance with them; possibly better than mine. I mean the man who will show *them* his ignorance, and then show them their own. But we have not these men. Our men are all too scholastic; they will talk to our fellows about the one thing of which they know nothing—seamanship. Hagbut preached a nautical sermon at my chapel once, which made my ears burn with sheer shame; and the lubber believes to this day that he produced a profound impression—as indeed he did—of his own utter pretentious imbecility. I have not time to go into this. I feel that I am the right man in the right place; and, to use our Saviour's own words, humbly and reverently, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Are you content?"

"I am more than content. You are doing well. Shall you be away long?"

"A year at least."

"A whole year? And when do you go?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"That is very sudden. But is all right and well, and very good, Alfred? I shall know that you are not lost but working, and shall stay by

home to prove to you that I am worthy of you. Yes." This is a little hard, and a little bitter too; but it is right, and good. You have forgiven my folly of this morning?"

"Why, I really don't know that there was any folly to forgive. You acted exactly as I should have wished my wife to act. You are the dearer to me for it."

"May I help you with your preparations?" she asked.

"My chest is always packed," he answered, with a smile. "It does not take long to ship such an old sailor as me. One chest of clothes, and one of books, are all I own; and my landlady has taken good care of them."

"But I may come and see you off?" she asked.

"Surely," he said; and they passed on to talk of other matters, and talked until it was time for him to go.

She scarcely knew how to break this sudden resolution to her father; whether he would think it a kind of desertion on Mr. Morley's part she could not tell. He took it quite quietly, and only said, "So soon, hey! Well, I am glad he has left me you. We will wait for him together, my child; and perhaps when he comes to fetch you away you shall take me with you out of this hateful, miserable place to a happier one."

There was a wild surging wind from the northwest, bringing with it occasional heavy showers of cold rain and brilliant gleams of cold sunshine—one of those bitter days which are almost worse than any weather in England, except east. The river was brisk though dull, leaden, and muddy, dashing in short crisp waves against the piles of Trafalgar Terrace. Mr. Morley was gone on board a little higher up the river, and Rebecca had said the last words to him; she was standing at the edge of the river, in the piercing blast, wrapped up from head to foot, shielding her little dog from the cold, and watching the ships pass swiftly seaward until his should come.

It was not long in coming. A beautiful schooner eager for her battle with the sea, curving her sharp high bows in triumphant anticipation, flying before the swift squall with only a foretop-sail set. He stood upon the poop and waved his hand, and so the ship passed on eastward, under a gleam of sun, toward a heavy black cloud which lay upon her path, and he was gone. And she stood silently weeping on the shore, and holding her little dog, close to nearly the most desolate heart which beat in England that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOMEWARD ALONE.

BUT by degrees her silent crying stilled itself, and, the cold blast arousing her, she turned resolutely westward against the wind, which, cold as it was, caused her but little annoyance, for the heavy weariness which showed itself in her gait, and the feeling of solitude which gnawed at her heart, made her indifferent to the weather.

A gleam of such happiness so rapidly overclouded. She had only had him for three days,

and had never realized actually her position toward him. Never. Until she saw him on the deck of the schooner passing rapidly eastward down the river. Then she knew really, for the first time, that the man had wooed her so well—had, that is to say, understood her thoroughly, and persistently shown her the best side of herself, and of himself also; had petted and encouraged what was good in her, and ignored what was bad; nay, had gone so high in the art of wooing that he had shown her herself at her best, and himself as something better still; that she found there was no one like him in the whole of her little world, and she believed no one like him in the larger world beyond hers. She knew that she loved him entirely with her whole heart.

There was not much sentimentality in her love for him. He was very handsome, certainly, of a rare and peculiar beauty, dangerous to "the peace of mind" of most young ladies, but she thought little of that. It was his "way" which was so irresistible, and the impression left on her mind was that he had selected her, the poor wild girl who had been a plague to every one, to do her the highest honor that man can do woman. That he was a penniless, friendless, and unpopular man she never considered. She looked on him as having descended from a high pedestal of perfect truth and perfect virtue to do honor to her. She could not understand it, for, like most very noble people, she utterly undervalued herself; but the fact was the same. He loved her, and she had lost him.

So she thought as she set her face westward, in her solitude, toward her miserable home. If there was any mere sentimentalism in her deep love, it was not for Morley. She could not be romantic and sentimental about him. In fact, a sentimental young lady would scarcely have liked her lover sailing away in a foretop-sail schooner, for a twelvemonth, three days after he had proposed to her. In Rebecca's sensible eyes this only made him nobler and more dear to her; she was assured of his love, and could laugh at Russel and Soper, and all the rest of them.

But this young lady had a good deal of sentimentality also, but, strangely enough, or rather *naturally* enough, she reserved all her stores of that article, not for Morley, but for his daughter *Hetty*, whom she had never seen.

If one was a Frenchman one might write, "Sentimental love is born of Mystery. Calypso steps from her pedestal and assists Eros to bind the napkin over his eyes." But I am not a Frenchman, and so will not say it. There was certainly nothing Calypso about Rebecca's love for Mr. Morley.

But with regard to his daughter. That young lady was a consummate mystery to her (which made Calypso step from her pedestal). And she had certainly, in some way or another, broken through all rules, which caused Rebecca to love her, while knowing nothing about her. (Calypso binds the eyes of Eros.) And so, fighting westward against the wind, she found herself thinking very much about Hetty. "She will be home before him, and we can talk together about him. I know that I shall love her."

Stereoscopes are to me only magnified photographs. Others have the stereoscopic eye. Let us look at her with a different eye—say the left.

There went wearily along the streets of Ber-

mondsey that day a weak, ill-clad woman with a baby on her arm, against the wind westward. There came such a driving, furious storm of cold rain that this poor woman was forced to put into an archway, and took this opportunity of opening her bosom and giving the baby her milk.

While she was doing so a shadow passed before her, and she hurriedly was drawing her shawl over the arrangement, when she saw that it was only a woman, and was more at her ease.

It was a singular woman too. Very young, very handsomely dressed, and wrapped up from head to foot in a shawl, the price of which would have kept that cowering woman for a twelve-month. Her hat was of golden seal-skin, the value of which that poor woman had reason to know, and in it was set a storm-petrel, a bird that woman knew too well also. She carried her head high this lady, and was so beautiful in face and in carriage that the cowering woman turned away.

In her bosom this splendid lady had something which was not a baby, only a little dog, with bright eyes, who put its head out to sneeze.

She put her grand head down to look at it, and caught sight of her shivering companion. She spoke at once, in the high, clear, splendid voice of an unaffected English lady.

"My dear creature, you are very cold."

"Yes, my lady," said the woman, "but my master is colder."

"Where is he?" said Rebecca.

"He is gone to sea, my lady, with half his kit, poor dear. He broke his arm in the frost hauling a rotten foretop-sail halyard, and he missed a voyage, and we have pawned every thing, and now my man is gone to sea again."

"So is mine," said Rebecca, without thinking.

"Yes, my dear lady; but your good gentleman has his full kit aboard, no doubt. My poor man will be up reefing top-sails in the snow, thin clad, while yours is warm and comfortable."

"Do you worry and vex yourself all the time your husband is away?" asked Rebecca.

"What would be the good?" the woman answered; "I've got to live, and to hope."

"Has he left you money to live on?" asked Rebecca.

"Lord bless you, no; he hadn't got none to leave. He will bring back some, though."

"And what have you to live on, then?" asked Rebecca, deeply interested.

"Charing and needle-work."

"Have you plenty of it?"

"Yes," she said; "I don't need to be beholden; I have a connection among sea-faring men and women, and I can make my three shillings a week till he comes back."

"Look here," said Rebecca, suddenly and quickly, "our cases are similar in some way, but your necessity is greater than mine. I have money, you have not. Take this five pounds; I meant it to buy a present for him, but had not time. When you want more write to me."

"But I might be an imposter, miss," said the woman, aghast.

"Your words show that you are none," said Rebecca, and, giving her address, she walked quickly away.

Quiet, through having got thoroughly well tired, she turned, after an eight miles' walk,

into her own dismal lane, and found herself confronted with Miss Soper and Mrs. Russel.

In small communities news fly fast: the whole earth is a small community now, thanks to the telegraph; hence our telegrams, which always require to be emphatically contradicted next day. It had got about in the small Walham Green connection that Mr. Morley was going to marry Miss Turner, but that she had shown such abominable temper that he had shipped on board a fast brig, and had gone to sea; and that she had started early that morning, down to the docks, to bring him to book. This was too good a thing for Russel and Soper to miss. She must come home some time in the afternoon, and so Russel and Soper cruised off the end of the lane, as Anson did for the Acapulco plate ship, knowing that if they could lay her by the board they would have something to reward them.

Their cruise was (comparatively speaking) as long as Lord Anson's, and in the end very little more successful. They made raids into the lane, and took Akin's house and Mr. Spicer's house—with tracts; but they were always soon on their post off the lane's end; and after a time the Acapulco ship arrived, and they boarded her, to the intense delight of Akin and Mr. Spicer, who were watching.

Rebecca, tall, handsome, fresh from the sea, head in air, with seal-skin hat and storm-petrel for ornament, thinking of things far away, was arrested by Russel and Soper. Mab, who had not been let to walk, had accommodated herself to circumstances so far; but Soper was too much for her, and she barked so furiously at that good lady that she was put down; a liberty which she used for a cloak of licentiousness, for she bit Soper's gown without a moment's hesitation, and kept hold of it too; which so agitated Soper that fat old Russel had to do the talking.

"She is a varmint little thing," said Akin to Spicer, in the distance.

"So is her mistress," said Mr. Spicer.

"My dear," said Russel, "we were here, and saw you coming. Are we to congratulate you?"

"On what?" said Rebecca. "Mab, you naughty little thing, be quiet."

"On your approaching marriage with Mr. Morley."

"No, I think not," said Rebecca. "He sailed for Tahiti this morning. But I am very much obliged to you, all the same."

"Is he coming back soon?" said Miss Soper, who had been delivered from Mab by Rebecca.

"I should think not," said Rebecca. "It is quite impossible that he can be back under a twelvemonth; possibly not for two years. But it is of no consequence that I know of."

And so those two very good people went away, and told the whole truth to the connection. And the whole truth was, that Mr. Morley had found out too much, and had shipped for Tahiti.

CHAPTER XXV.

HAGBUT IN A NEW LIGHT.

BUT to Rebecca's great and never-ending astonishment, Hagbut came out in an entirely new line at this juncture. Hagbut was stupid, vain, avaricious, and selfish. You will find such char-

acters in every form of religion, just as you will find Morley's. But Hagbut was an exceptional man. The man had power. He had put a few ends before him, social and religious; and in steadily pursuing those ends he looked neither to the right nor the left. The success of his own small religious connection, and his own personal governance of that connection, were his two great objects. Take him apart from those objects, and you would find a man not without strength, but who seemed narrow, because he referred all matters in heaven and earth to his own services and that of his own sect. If any matter did not appear to him to interfere with these two objects he *could* be just, and even generous.

Now Rebecca had done no such thing as the scandalous Hetty; and besides—and besides—well, he had been fond of Rebecca once on a time. And sometimes, when Carry was most religious, and most affectionate—when he was wearied with religious work, and would gladly have heard something of the world which he was bound to despise in words, Hagbut thought seriously that he had made a mistake. Rebecca would not have him, it is true; still, Carry, with her money, was a great bore, and Rebecca was worth ten of her.

Russel and Soper invaded him when he was thinking of these things, and saying to himself that he was glad the poor girl was so well fitted with Morley; and honestly, and, as far as he was able, tenderly wishing her good luck, Russel and Soper did not meet with the reception they anticipated.

"He has gone and left her," said Miss Soper. "Rebecca Turner was down after him to the docks this morning; but he has gone and left her."

"He has gone to provide a home for her," said Mr. Hagbut.

"Mr. Hagbut, it is not so. Mr. Morley has run away. She told us with her own lips that he was gone away, and that she didn't care when he came back."

"I know she didn't say *that*," said Hagbut, bending his ugly face on Miss Soper, and thrusting out his powerful jaw in a way which Miss Soper did not like. "What were her words?"

"Her words were that he was gone for a twelvemonth, and that it was no matter," said Mrs. Russel.

"See how you stand cross-examination, you two," said Hagbut. "I can't trust a word you say. Now look you here, you two. That girl is my sister-in-law, and a good girl too; and Morley is the most refined and educated man in our connection—a connection which wants, what I have not got, refinement and education more than most. I won't have Rebecca's name pulled about. She is a fine creature."

The more cowardly Russel was abashed at once; not so the more resolute and sourer Soper, who had never felt a man's influence, but who had got her living by bullying girls.

"You pulled her name about one time pretty freely yourself," said she.

"Yes; but that was my business. This is none of yours. You mind what I say, and leave the girl alone. I won't have her meddled with. Mind, I mean what I say."

And, indeed, he looked very much as if he

did. Pale, ugly, and generally lazy as he was, there was an immense amount of powerful animation in the man, with a good deal of shrewd sense. Russel and Soper had brains enough to find out this; Rebecca had brains enough to find out more.

She was alone that evening, with an atlas before her, following Morley across the map, when the little maid told her that Mr. Hagbut was come to see her. And she said, "Show him in."

Mr. Hagbut came in, and they greeted one another civilly; after which Mr. Hagbut pointed to the atlas, and said:

"After *him*?"

"Yes."

"You are a happy woman, Rebecca, if it is all right between you and Morley. Come, sister-in-law, tell me that it is."

"It is 'all right,' as you call it," said Rebecca, laughing. "He is going to be away for an indefinite time; but we are, what the world calls, engaged."

"I wish you happy, most heartily," said Hagbut, leaning his ugly face on his great fat hands and looking at her. "It is your own fault if you are not. He is refined, and a gentleman; I am neither the one nor the other."

"I think you are a very good man, Mr. Hagbut," she said, looking him frankly in the face.

"I do among vulgar people, being vulgar myself. And I do good where a gentleman would fail. But, Rebecca, it is well we did not marry."

"It is very well, indeed," said Rebecca.

"I suppose you have often put this case to yourself with regard to me—'If I had married that ugly, fat man, without ideas, without the manners of a gentleman, without education, death would have been better than life.' You have put it so, have you not?"

"Not so strongly as that, Mr. Hagbut; but still very strongly," said Rebecca, with resolution.

"Did you ever put the other side of the question?" asked Hagbut. "Did you ever think of me? Did you ever think for one instant what a hell on earth (I beg pardon) my life would have been, tied for life to a beautiful, clever, refined, and furiously rebellious woman like yourself? You congratulate yourself on your escape; congratulate me on mine. We should not have lived together a month in decency; for my will is immovable."

Rebecca paused for a long time. At last she said:

"It seems to me, brother-in-law, that you are a very honest man. You served me ill once; but let us forget all, and be friends: God knows I want them. Come, brother-in-law, do not be my enemy, although we can never be companions; for we should squabble so dreadfully over ways of speech on religious matters, you know; and I doubt if we should agree with regard to Hetty."

"What do you know of her?" said Mr. Hagbut.

"Nothing. What has she done?"

"If you do not know, I see no reason for telling you. I have taken my side there, and will maintain it."

"Well, if you go against her, you will spare me?" said Rebecca.

Hagbut would not have taken an oath in a court of justice to save his life; but in his heart, without speech, he swore a deep and terrible oath then. No religionist can be without sentiment; and the deepest sentimental part of Hagbut's soul was aroused by the spectacle of this utterly solitary and defenseless girl, whom he had once thought that he had loved, in spite of his fear of her, alone against the world. Hagbut made affirmation silently to himself that he would stand between this poor child and the world, which meant their small connection. And he did it, like a leal and loyal soul. It is easy to see the worst of these men. You must know them to find out the best of them. For my part, I have known many ministers of religion. Roman Catholic verbiage or Dissenting verbiage may be offensive to the ear; but in twenty years I have only known two bad ministers of religion of any sect, and that is not a large percentage, after all: one speaks, of course, merely of a large personal acquaintance. Being on dangerous ground I will step off it; merely enrolling my opinion that the ministers of religion, with all their eccentricities, are the most valuable class in the community.

Hagbut spoke to Rebecca no more after this. Carry would have been jealous had she known that he had said so much. But Russel and Soper's vilipendings of Rebecca were now reduced to sniffs and glances.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GAZETTE.

AND so it came about that Rebecca, who began at the very beginning of this story by wishing herself dead, wished nothing of the kind now; but only wished, like Jane Eyre, "that she might keep in good health and not die."

Yet she was infinitely worse off than in the old times when she wished herself dead. She was in utter and entire solitude, for her father was not much better company than can be found in the saner side of Bedlam. She had not a soul to speak to in any sort of way approaching the confidential, except Mab, and Mab could not answer her.

Although Hagbut had stilled all tongues with his fat emphatic fist, yet even he could not prevent people looking at Rebecca in chapel; and she knew that they were looking at her, and she hated it. She never saw them looking at her, but she felt it; and the effect of this consciousness on her face was to produce an expression of calm, careless anger, which assisted devotion in no way whatever.

Had she known that they were only studying in a humble way her imperial, magnificent beauty, reading it like a book, and learning from it, as one learns art at first, from a great and traditionally authenticated picture, she might have been content, and have given them at times softer developments of her not very mobile face. But she thought they were only staring at her, and she hated her chapel worse than ever.

She felt this more than ever one morning, when she had gone alone, her father being too ill to come. "I will never go again," she said. "They hate me." And she stalked out through the crowd with her head in the air.

Soper was helping Russel along, and said, "Did you ever see any thing like that?"

"A bold-faced jig," said Russel.

"I mean," said Soper the schoolmistress, "did you ever see such beauty in all your life? Because I have had some experience, and I never did."

Soper and Russel went their ways, and Rebecca went hers. But she was followed home by two admirers.

Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer. When they had turned into their own lane they came up beside her, one on each side, and spoke to her boldly and eagerly.

"Glad to see you about, Miss. Mr. Turner is quite well, I hope?"

"My father is not at all well," said Rebecca.

"I am so glad to see you two at chapel."

"We will leave that alone, Miss, at present," said Mr. Spicer. "We want to speak to you very particular indeed, Miss. Don't us, Jim?"

"Indeed we do."

"You see, Miss," said Mr. Spicer the sweep, "we sweeps as a general rule are the cleanest of all working chaps, always taking a bath afore we turns in. But we have what we call the black bed, into which we turns in all our crock when there's a difficult flue early in the morning. And we got orders for Beaufort House, and (you won't tell on a man for breaking the act) I lay in the black bed with my youngest son Tom, to put he up the flue before the police was round. It was again the law, I know, but that boy loves his profession; I should say his art; for that boy is as much an artist in a crooked flue as the great Anelay is in the *Mysteries of London*. With a father's feelings I went with him, of course, and we was no sooner out of our house than he said,

"See to those coves round Mr. Turner's, father."

"Burglars?" asked Rebecca.

"There was two on them, Miss. It was pretty dark, but we could see. One was a young swell, and the other I knowd."

"This is very alarming," said Rebecca.

"What did you do?"

"I called out the name of the man I knowd. I said, 'Bob Syers, you hook it.' And he offered in return a low remark, referring to a misfortune of mine in years gone by; but he hooked it all the same."

"Whatever shall we do?" said Rebecca.

"Put the police to watch. Syers is well knowd, as is doubtless the young swell."

"I can't employ the police," said Rebecca, incautiously. "Whatever shall I do?"

In the following paragraph I am only speaking of what I have seen with my own eyes. It is wrong and immoral, but there it is, for better or for worse—a great deal for worse, I should say.

Rebecca had won these men. Not by her beauty, for their eyes were too utterly untrained to see her beauty. They would probably have pronounced Buckingham Palace to be finer than Wells, Bayeux, or Salisbury, and have called Winchester a barn. They would possibly have called a red-faced Devon lass far prettier than Rebecca; it was not her beauty which had won these men, it was her sympathy and geniality.

They were neither of them very respectable men, but either of them would have fought for her, merely in return for kind words and kind acts to their wives, at any time. Now that she had confessed to them that there was something the matter in her father's house, which forbade the police being called in, they would die for her or risk it. There was a new bond of sympathy between her and these gentlemen now, which made them ready for any thing in her behalf. It is all wrong and bad, but so it is. You don't know where the criminal class begins. *Still less do you know where the sympathy with the criminal class begins.*

And further, Mr. Turner, solicitor and Methodist, had been an offensive person to them both by his mere existence hitherto. Now that there was an obvious hitch in his affairs, insoluble by those enemies of mankind the Metropolitan police, they began to have a fellow-feeling with him which they never had before. The sympathies of people like Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin are distinctly *not* on the side of the law. On all sentimental grounds they were perfectly ready to assist Rebecca.

"Lord bless you, Miss," said Mr. Spicer, "don't vex yourself. We will watch. You have got a little dog as will bark."

"Yes," said Rebecca, showing Mab.

"Pretty dear," said Jim Akin, "there she is. Let me have the handling of her, Miss, please. She is worth ten pound, Miss; there ain't a p'int about this dog which is at fault, Miss," he continued, nursing Mab.

"Never mind the dog, Jim," said Mr. Spicer.

"Ah, but I do mind the dog, Tom," said Mr. Akin. "You ain't a cynosure in dogs, you see."

"He'd serve six months for a rat-tailed terrier, Miss," said Mr. Spicer. "We all have our fancies. But see here; durst you fire a gun?"

"Yes, I know how; my father has shown me."

"Then," said Mr. Spicer, "every time that little dog barks, you fire a gun out a window, and me and Jim will be with you. They won't try it on often, if you do that, Miss. Their nerves is never good. If it only comes to nothing at all, they will get scared; if we get 'em in the house, why, then, we shall know what to do. You needn't bother about the policemen. In fact, we don't want no police round here."

"I will do what you tell me," said Rebecca.

"If any thing were to happen you could hold your tongues—keep silent—could you not?"

Mr. Spicer sniffed, and Mr. Akin, in giving back Mab, winked. "Tell her about the backer, Tom," said this coarse young man.

"Hold your tongue, you fool," said Mr. Spicer.

"What do you suppose the young lady would want to know about the running of a two-penny half-penny, four hundred boxes of cigars, so high up the river as this, in a ballast lighter? I am ashamed on you. Good-afternoon, Miss; depend on us." And so they went.

Leaving Rebecca with the terrible impression that she had connected herself with the criminal classes, not through her own fault, but utterly without hope of extrication. She was so puzzled by her quaint position that she was actually whimsical, almost humorous over it.

"I shall be in jail, my dear," she said to Mab.

"And you will be reduced to bacon and cold potatoes at Akin's until I come out again. I wish

father had not broken the law in this matter, even from his very high motives. Bother you!" she continued, shaking her fist at the law of the land; "you will pass over Sir Gorham Philpott and Lord Ducetoy, and you will catch my father. You Brute, not if I can stop it."

She had come at her purpose before she reached home. Her father was in a very difficult position—retaining papers which he had no right to detain—detaining them on very chivalrous grounds. But he had only seen part of the consequences in a sentimental, or, as she put it, Walham Green way; the first thing she had to do was to put the Limehouse view of the question before him.

So she burst in on him suddenly, and said, "Pa, you have made a nice mess of it. They are going to rob and murder us all. They were about the house two nights ago."

"So I suppose," said Mr. Turner.

"So you *suppose*," said Rebecca. "Well, I tell you, pa, that I am not used to it, and that I am not going to stand it. Trampling about in other people's gardens, indeed! I tell you, pa, that I am not going to endure it."

"Are you going to leave me, Becky?" said Mr. Turner.

Rebecca had not calculated on this. The thread of her argument was raveled.

"Leave you, dear," she said, kneeling at his feet. "Why, father, father, I have no one left but you, now Alfred is gone. My dear, I will never leave you this side of the grave."

"Is Alfred Morley actually gone?" said Mr. Turner, eagerly.

"Yes, but he will come back. He is only gone for a weary year or two; just to leave us alone, you know."

"I thought from your manner that you were angry with me; stay by me."

"I was and am angry with you," said Rebecca; "you are moping and brooding when you should be acting. We want your brains to direct us; we will find hands to assist."

"We?" said Mr. Turner.

"Yes, we," said Rebecca; "Spicer and Akin and I, not to mention Mab. Tell us what to do."

"You have strange accomplices," said Turner.

"And you have done a strange thing. Their motives are as high as yours. They help us from mere love."

"What have they seen?" asked Mr. Turner, rousing himself.

"Our house was 'attempted' four days ago by two men. One, Syer, a burglar, and the other a young gentleman. Spicer the sweep knew Syer, and challenged him. The young gentleman he did not know."

Mr. Turner lay back in his chair and laughed—laughed again almost heartily; then he began to speak.

"My dear child, this is exactly as I supposed. The man Syer is, as you tell me, you being acquainted with the criminal class so intimately, a burglar. Now the young gentleman who was with him is Edmund Philpott, whose forgeries, those of my own name in particular, I hold."

"Well," said Rebecca.

"You may well say 'well,' said Mr. Turner; "you don't understand business; indeed, no one will soon, and financing has come in, and the L. C. & D. can't exactly make out whether

Mr. P. owes them six millions of money or they owe him two and a half millions. But you understand enough for this. That a Limited Liability Company bought the Gorham-Philpott business for £500,000, and have made a mess of it, as limited companies always do and always will. We don't want limited liability, girl; we want unlimited responsibility. Ha! look at M. when he was short—what did the trade say to the limited liability companies? Why, they said, one and all, 'We will have the man, and not a parcel of irresponsible shareholders. We know the man, and the man is honest as knows the business,' says they; 'but we don't know 500 irresponsible shareholders;' and the trade pulled the man through, and there he is now. Well, child, you can't understand this, though every reader of a newspaper can. This Gorham-Philpott business was sold; and I gave up my position as their attorney. And, first of all, I did a wrong thing for our relation, Lord Ducetoy—I kept his papers here to save them from the smash. And, secondly, to save Sir Gorham I kept all the papers which young Edmund had forged."

"And you did well and nobly," said Rebecca. "You have broken the law, I doubt not; but I am with you."

"Well, that is finely said," said Mr. Turner. "But don't you go breaking the law; you know one is quite enough in a family. Listen and don't talk nonsense. The Limited Company has gone to unutterable ruin. The property of the old house was guaranteed to the Company, and their deeds must come into the Bankruptcy Court. Some I have burned in my brooding folly; some are here still. I hardly know, child, what I have destroyed and what I have not. But young Philpott has forged heavily; he believes that his forgeries are here, and he will murder us all."

"And indeed he will murder none of us," said Rebecca; "I'll sort him if he comes here. Pa, dear, what on earth ever caused you to be so silly?"

"As how?"

"As to burn those papers."

"Brooding and brooding," said Mr. Turner; "brooding about your mother eternally, for one thing. I don't know what I have burned and what I have not."

"Can't you look and see, pa?"

"No. I am gone beyond that. It kills me to look at papers. I am a lost man."

"Are you in debt, pa?"

"No. There will be money enough when I am gone. But Hagbut told me on our last meeting about business matters that he saw no signs of grace in me. And he is an experienced man in spiritual matters; therefore I doubt that I have never been convinced of sin, and am damned everlastingly. That is all."

"This is worse nonsense than the other," said Rebecca, furiously. "Pa, how can you sit there and talk like that, with the good God listening to you? Hagbut is a good fellow, but he ought to be hung if he told you that."

"He did not, my dear. I know it," said Mr. Turner.

"Well, I can do nothing with you," said Rebecca, "except ask you not to talk nonsense. Do you think they will try the house again?"

"Certainly."

"Shall you shoot young Philpott if you meet him?" said Rebecca.

The answer was a curious one. Mr. Turner raised a wan, pale face to hers, from which every kind of expression was banished. Her father's brain had gone. The mechanical work of his office for so many years, his terrible troubles with his wife in old times, and this last miserable, silly, inextricable confusion, had been too much for him. Rebecca saw that she could not trust him again.

Once see that dead stare in the eyes of one you love, and love may remain; but confidence has departed forever.

Rebecca repeated her question, with an artificial laugh. "You won't shoot young Philpott, will you, pa?"

His answer was worse than his silence. He looked at her steadily, and with some recollection of the old days, of which she knew nothing, said:

"Trout should be as bright as peacocks before you should catch them. Or, to be more correct, like the butterfly called Vanessa Io. You should lay them carefully in cowslips and grass; an orchis or two atop is not amiss; Morio or Pyramidalis would do; but, above all things, a sprig of 'Geum,' which the hinds call 'Avens,' Lord knows why. Seek also in the damp meadows for your Ophioglossum, and put a piece of it in your biggest trout's mouth. And when she sees it she will know what you mean by her. And she will walk in the sun along the south wall, and will pick for you rosemary, old man, and the flower which fools call 'prince's feather,' but which wise men call, 'Love lies a-bleeding.' That is what she will do, and then go and marry George Somers."

"Lord help me!" said poor Rebecca, "his mind is gone."

Not gone, Rebecca, only babbling of green fields. Most men have lived at least three lives before they get married, and once and for all lay every thing at the feet of one woman. He was only dazed a little in his brain, and, as I have noticed in dying men, reverting to the first of his lives—a life she knew not of. He was shrewd enough next morning; his keenness was more painful to her than his wandering.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WALPURGIS NIGHT.

MR. TURNER slept, or pretended to, till nine o'clock; then he began furiously ringing his bell. Rebecca came to him in her dressing-gown.

"Is the *Times* come, child?" he said.

"How could it be come, pa?"

"Go Eastward, child, and meet it. Quick, go!"

She dressed herself and went Eastward; she had got nearly to the South Kensington Museum before she got the *Times*, and she hurried back with it. Her father sat up in bed while he opened it. After glancing at a column or so, he said, "What a thundering lie!"

"What, pa?"

"Philpott & Co., Limited," he answered, "bankrupt for £800,000. Why, child, I could account for £1,200,000. I will have another nap

after that. If any genteel looking man calls, tell him—well, tell him he had better call somewhere else. We know too much here."

What between Turner's wildness of the night before, and his shrewd jocularly now, poor Rebecca was utterly puzzled. One thing she knew, and that was that Morley, Hartop, and the never-seen Hetty were all at sea, that her father's mind was going, and that she with her affectionate heart were all in the world together.

One can see how our nation has developed by turning over old novels; for one, over *Dombey and Son*, written by Dickens, a man not unacquainted with the ways of this world, but by our new lights rather behind his time, in a few particulars.

For instance, Mr. Dombey goes bankrupt for the mean sum of one hundred thousand pounds. That was all very well in 1848, but we have improved on that since. Mr. Perch, the messenger, congratulated himself on the fact that Dombey had gone for "one hundred—thousand—pound." That is but a small smash now. Great, and heretofore trusted names in trade, seem to be vying with the worst of the old aristocratic scoundrels, and beating them hollow. The frightful recklessness of the habitual gambler, Lord Mornington (about £700,000, leaving no one unpaid in the end), or that of the unhappy boy just dead (some £200,000), is fairly beaten out of calculation by the deficiencies of some of the clear-est and best heads in the world of business. How these men can keep sane under such a nightmare of hopeless debt is the wonder to some. See if this little case of the Philpotts is overstated in any way. Do we not all know of an honored (justly honored) member of the House, now dead and beyond trouble, who sat later than any one at the House; sat through the most wearisome of business, *sooner than go home*? There was a leaden weight of £300,000 on that man's soul. That hopeless deficiency of capital, which well used would have saved Bethnal Green, or the Isle of Dogs, from their present state, hanging on his mind, hanging round his neck. It was no error of his, but of younger branches of his family. He was one of the purest, best, and noblest of men, but condemned to silence for the love which he bore to his family.

Such an old age is not good to think about. Better to study William Blake, when he is most wildly melancholy, and most unutterably sad. Still in Blake's deepest sadness there is always tenderness and hope. And so we should think of this poor member, who had never one selfish thought in his heart. Turn to Blake's great master-piece, *Death's Door** (which I have known

since I was six years old, and which never falls on one), when you think of an old man, dishonored through no fault of his, creeping to his tomb, as Sir Gorham Philpott was to his.

The younger members of a dishonored family will, however, sometimes make a fight to save what can not be saved, more particularly where there has been criminality. Young Philpott was distinctly criminal. He had forged more boldly than Sir John Paul. He was, unlike that man, dissolute, dissipated, and utterly reckless. He was perfectly safe if he could recover his own forgeries, and he knew that Turner had them all. Could he get those forgeries in his own hand, he was well provided for. With a view to these contingencies he had bought heavily in foreign funds, denying himself every kind of luxury to do so. In the case of a mere bankruptcy, these funds could not be tracked; but in the case of a criminal prosecution, his money was of little value to him, for he would spend his time at Portland. This made him desperate.

Another thing made him still more desperate. This young forger was a very handsome young fellow, of good manners. And his family had caused him to make a great alliance with another great house. And so he had married, somewhat against his will, one of the most beautiful and charming women ever born.

He married her first, and fell in love with her afterward, as is often the case. His love for her grew as time went on; her exquisite grace, her perfect equable temper, her beauty, her deference to him, her intelligence—all had their effect on him. And after two years he awoke one morning, by her side, and saw the whole of his very ghastly position. He was a felon, who might be in Cold-Bath Fields to-morrow, and she thought him an honest and respectable man.

"She would stand the bankruptcy, but she could not stand *that*," was what he said. "By the Lord, I have a good mind to tell her the whole business and get it over."

So it happened one morning that Mrs. Philpott, turning over in her bed, found her husband kneeling at the bedside with the sheets bathed in blood. "I have hurt my head," he said. "I got out of bed incautiously and have broken my head over the dressing-table." She was piteous and tender over his accident; little thinking that the young man in his mad despair had rushed against the wall. Enough of such things; the man was desperate.

His desperation little matters to us save that he brought it to Turner's house, and so involved our Rebecca and her dog Mab. In a little story about homely facts like these, one has not room for one's rascals. Neither has one the genius of Shakspeare to develop one's rascal (Falstaff) until loving gets to be right, and one loves him.

Rebecca said to her father, "Pa, haven't you made a great mess of it?"

"Very great indeed, my dear."

"Why don't you tell the whole truth, pa?"

"Because I should be in Cold-Bath Fields Prison, my dear."

"But we can't come out of it, dear pa, any way."

windows of the charnel-house, to which we must all come. But above and aloft, in blazing sunlight, is the newly-awakened figure of a young man rising naked and wondering into the wonders of the new life.

* Notes are very unpopular, but one seems necessary here. The piece I mean is to be found at p. 224 of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, but has been copied many times. A bent old man, doubled up with age, is hobbling on crutches into a vault. He is not well clad, and the winds of the world are blowing on him from behind, and helping him toward the dark doorway—a half-open iron door set in Cyclopean stone-work. The attitude and gait of the old man are, as far as my experience goes, not only unapproached but unapproachable. Many Frenchmen—and a few Englishmen—can paint action in double-quick time. Blake here has expressed action, not in double-quick time, or even in quick time, but in *slow* time. I have no space to descant on the marvelous sentimental beauties of this wonderful piece, worthy to rank with Michael Angelo's Lorenzo de Medici. Below the feet of the old man, dimly seen in the darkness, are the barred

"My dear child," said Mr. Turner; "the whole thing is a stalemate at chess. No one dare move for his life. I have seen worse muddled matters than this got through." And indeed he gave her proof.

"Why, even in Paul's case," he said, "if it had not been for a high-minded and indignant parson the whole thing would have dropped through. I tell you, child, that you don't know business. Nobody is safe except a magistrate's butler. I am very, very tired again, Rebecca. I am going to die."

"Pa, you had better go to bed again if you talk such nonsense as that."

"I am going, my dear. I shall sleep through the day, and wake at night. They will try the house to-night. Be ready for them."

"How shall I be ready for them, father?"

"Bless the girl, I don't know. Ducetoy's deeds are in the iron safe. Philpotts' papers are in the box under my bed. Do the best you can, child; I am horribly drowsy—deadly drowsy. They will try the house to-night, and if the house gets into the possession of the police, I can't say what will happen. Go and see to matters, I am going to sleep."

Rebecca, seeing that there was nothing more to be got out of her father, did probably the quaintest and most indiscreet thing which she ever did in all her life. Matters were very desperate with her. Anticipated disaster had been familiar with her for some time. But here was disaster itself. Disaster of the very worst kind. She knew perfectly well that in the opinion of experienced lawyers about the great bankruptcy of the Philpotts, her father must sooner or later, through his folly, be involved. How deep she knew not. Her father, with the highest motives possible, had broken the law. She went for advice and assistance to people whom she dreamed had had some experience that way themselves.

It was twelve o'clock, high noon, when she put her hat on and stepped across the lane to Mrs. Akin.

Mrs. Akin was in a deluge of soap-suds. She took in washing. Rebecca said to her, "Mrs. Akin, is your husband at home?"

"Dear Miss," she said, "no. He is out with his barrer. There is some husbands, Miss, which you will find yourself, when you are married, and a nicer gentleman I never see, I am sure, who objects to any washing at home at all, but wants it all put out, and I am sure I hope for your favors, Miss. Some will stand one washing-day in the week, and some won't. But my dear man, he has a washing-day every week, and never grumbles. He may come round home to dinner, Miss; but I ask you to look at his little home, full of damp linen; you are a-sneezing yourself. If he comes home, shall I make him step across?"

"If he would be so good," said Rebecca.

"He would step further than that for you, Miss," she said; "there is a little one in heaven pleading for you with us, Miss. The old fellow shall come across."*

Rebecca left the coster-monger's wife—not a noticeable woman in any way—and went next door, to the chimney-sweep's wife, who was decidedly a noticeable person.

She was a very stout, florid woman, with all the ill temper which is produced by the accumulation of fat round the heart; she scowled on Rebecca.

"Is Mr. Spicer at home, please?" she asked.

"No, he ain't."

"I am very sorry for that, for I wanted to speak to him."

"What about?"

"I only wanted a little advice," said Rebecca.

"I can give you some of that. Don't you go trampolining about with those Methodist parsons too much. They are no good."

"I shall not have the chance of doing so any more, Mrs. Spicer," said she.

"And a good job, too. And now you have come to us for advice, I'll advise you a little more. Don't you come here unsettling my man's mind, and getting him to chapel, and setting his mind to the keeping of the law about the boys. Why, I suppose your advice has cost me a cool £20 a year. He won't send a boy up a flue now since he has taken to consort with you. And, if you knew any thing at all, you would know there was flues which could not be swep' without boys. And our connection resents it naturally. My man says, 'It is agin the law,' and they make answer, 'Do you accuse us of abetting an' breaking the law?' and he, with his spirit, makes answer, 'I do.' 'Then you need not call again, Mr. Spicer,' they says; and that is your doing."

"You are very impertinent and entirely wrong," said Rebecca; "if I have prevented Mr. Spicer, my very good friend, from sending boys up these horrible chimneys, I am very glad. I would have any one transported who sent those children up the chimneys. I want to know when Mr. Spicer will be at home."

"Then you just sha'n't. I don't want him near yours. There's worse gone on in that house than sending boys up flues. Better send a boy up a flue than chuck a woman down stairs. You sha'n't see him—you sha'n't see him. Lawk, old man, is that you?"

It was indeed that worthy chimney-sweep, who had been awakened by his wife's voice, and had heard the whole of the argument while he was dressing. And a very fine, grave-looking man Mr. Spicer was, too; ugly, but rather grand, owing none of his good looks to his complexion, which was rendered very pale by daily applications of soot. He laid his hand on his wife's shoulder, and with the cool determination which seems almost a *spécialité* in his trade,* beckoned to her to retire, which she did, perfectly dumb.

"We will walk across the road, Miss, if you please," said Mr. Spicer, and he led the way.

* Chimney-sweeps are but little known or understood. Very few people know that that splendid young man Sadler, who raced Kelly himself so hard the other day, was a chimney-sweep. I was trying once to make peace between a working bricklayer (Harris) and a working cooper (Letwell). Old Harris struck out in pride of family; Letwell's sister (I think) had married a sweep. Old Harris afterward got two months for a violent breach of the revenue laws, about which I had warned him; so I suppose there was no further question about family precedence.

* To meet any charge of want of verisimilitude from any one not acquainted with the laboring classes as well as myself, I have reproduced actual dialogue. One has no reply to criticism: which is a pity. A man who cares for the opinions of the most able of the weekly press, writes in fetters—as I do. I suppose I should do otherwise; but abuse gets a wearisome thing after a time.

As soon as they were clear of the house he said, "The best woman in the world, Miss, if you only knew it."

"So I should fancy," said Rebecca; "she don't like me; but there are many others who don't. In fact, I don't at all like myself."

"Indeed, Miss!" said Mr. Spicer.

"No," said Rebecca; "I don't like myself at all. I don't *hate* myself, Mr. Spicer; I only dislike and despise myself. For you know, Mr. Spicer, I am a most contemptible fool."

"Indeed, Miss. Now, I should not have thought that, unless you had told me. But it is no doubt true. You are better educated than I am."

"You are not a gentleman, Mr. Spicer," said Rebecca, laughing in spite of herself.

"No, Miss; but in what particular?"

"When any one accuses themselves to a *gentleman*, Mr. Spicer, the gentleman excuses them. Now, you have confirmed my view of myself, doubtless from politeness; but still, you are no gentleman. You should have told me that I was one mass of wisdom; as it is, you have merely confirmed my opinion, somewhat emphatically, that I am a contemptible fool."

"I only meant to mind my manners, Miss; and my manners tell me that you should never contradict a lady. That is what Mr. Hagbut calls the unwritten law. That is about the size of that."

"Well," said Rebecca, "we must not joke any more, Spicer; I am in serious trouble."

"We know all about it, my dear Miss," said Spicer; "the only question is, When and where?"

"The *when* is to-night, I am afraid; and the *where* will be inside the house."

"Then there is no reason for much talk, Miss. The least said is soonest mended. Bob and I will come in and lay down any where."

"But I want to explain to you," went on Rebecca.

"Just exactly what we don't want, Miss. We want to know nothing. Did you ever hear a man cross-examined?"

"No."

"Ah! If the grand jury would take the trouble to follow some of their 'true bills' down stairs, instead of going off to play billiards, they wouldn't send so much down stairs as they do. I don't want no cross-examination, unless I can say No. Tell me and Bob what you want done, but nothing more."

"Can Mr. Akin and you sleep together in one garret? And can you know nothing at all?"

"We can sleep together well enough, and we can easy manage holding our tongues, if there is nothing told us to talk about."

"Then come about ten o'clock, please, and I will have every thing arranged for you."

Her father slept all day, but at night got up and dressed himself, and took dinner and wine. Then, setting all the doors open, he walked up and down the house. At the last she told him what she had done; and he, having got feeble and ill again, was persuaded to go to bed, with his clothes and his pistol all ready.

"I shall not sleep a wink," he said; and saying so, laid his weary head over, and was asleep in one moment.

Then Rebecca began *her* tiger walk up and down the house, until Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer turned in. Mr. Akin, a scientific and experienced hand, got Mab, and put her to sleep in the small of his back; which, as he explained to his companion, was the wakefulest place of all for a dog. Mab was well enough content, and scarcely recognized her mistress during her frequent visits to her two sleeping friends. For they soon slept, after a consultation about taking off their boots. Mr. Spicer could never, he said, sleep well in his boots, unless he was three-quarters on. But Mr. Akin, having pointed out to him that this job would come to rough-and-tumble in any way, or might come to Chevy-high-ho the grinder, Mr. Spicer determined to sleep without even the removal of his boots; which determination he put in force with the rapidity of a man who has to do his day's work long before other people are awake.

It was a wild night, dripping wet, with great rushes of wind from the westward—the middle of a wild spring—when Rebecca began her night watch. She set dim candles in different rooms, and began her walk up and down; going from her own room along the main passage at the head of the stairs toward her father's door, and passing that to the room where her two indifferent, honest friends slept and snored.

The wind hurled at every window and door in the crazy old house; and, with an ear tuned to concert-pitch by anxiety and nervousness, she listened for something more than the wind, but nothing came.

It would have been less dreary, perhaps, had the night been silent and still. But the dreariness of that house to one listening for suspicious sounds, and hearing a hundred, was terrible, even before the lane was still and asleep. After that, terror grew into horror, and horror into a kind of temporary loss of judgment.

Dim, inexpressible, causeless terrors come, I believe, on the most prosperous of us when we wake in the night in the dark. I know a military officer of good repute, excellent courage, respectable fortune, and without one solitary anxiety in this world, who takes his recreation in these sad, solitary hours, by thinking of *death*. By putting to himself that he must die some time or another, and trying to make out what the last, horrible hour will be like. Rebecca's fantasies, this night, were scarcely more reasonable than his.

There was very little cause for fear of any kind: there was nothing of what some call sensational about her position. She was splendidly protected. Her father had done a very quaint thing, but she had practically checkmated all consequences. Still, she was in a state of nervous anxiety; and that anxiety became precordial, and made her start with inexplicable terrors at every sound, and in passing every dark place. The physical effect of this nervousness was to make her knees tremble, and so cause her to walk unsteadily. The mental effects of it were still stranger.

For her anxiety began to take a single point as its culminating one. I do not think that this is by any means a rare case. A man confused in ruin, brought on by an accumulation of causes, will say that he always knew that the beginning of it was some twenty-pound speculation. A man, dazed, stunned, and ruined by his wife's

death, will attribute it to her swallowing a pin ten years before, after his neighbors had been hearing her bark her heart out all the winter with tubercular disease of the lungs. Not well chosen as examples, possibly, but which will do. When people's minds are confused they will pick out a cause for a particular form of anxiety, seldom the right one. Rebecca did on this occasion. The door behind Carry's bed—disused, and locked and bolted for so many years—was the point she fixed on as the most horrible and dangerous point in the house.

It communicated, as the reader may remember, between the used portion of the house and the unused. Since her mother's death, that back staircase and all the adjacent part of the house had been closed up, and had been a mystery and a horror to them. In very early days, as early as Rebecca could remember, Carry used to have a habit of shrieking out suddenly in the night that some one was trying the door; after which she would fly, in her night-gown, and leave Rebecca in the terror of death. And now, on this, to her, as she believed, supreme night, Rebecca, with a solitary candle feebly lighting up the great room, stood before that door, and thought of what lay behind it.

What *was* there, locked up for twenty years, behind Carry's bed? The skin of her head had a cold, nervous creeping in it (which is what the romantic people mean when they say that So-and-so's hair stood on end). She had a horror on her which was indescribable, as awful as the horror which occasionally precedes death; it had a somewhat singular effect on her, for she moved Carry's bed out of the way, and looked at the door; and as she did so she saw that the handle was softly turned, and some one pressed on the door from the outside.

One bolt and the lock was all that opposed her. She had got into a state of horror by solitude and mystery. One simple physical movement, even of a door-handle, restored her to herself in an instant. "We will get this through, my gentleman," she thought, with a low laugh; and suddenly and dextrously unlocked and unbolted the door, threw it open, and said, "Walk in, if you please."

No one was there. There was nothing before her but a dark passage, ending in darkness. The solitary glance at her feet showed her, not only that no one was there, but that no one had been there at all. The dust of twenty years, so lightly laid by the hand of ever busy Nature, was untouched. The foot of a spider might be traced on it, but not that of a man. The door had been tried by hands not of this world.

So her horror revived again tenfold; but, in her obstinacy, she went on into the passage. And as she went she turned round and saw the marks of her own footsteps in the dust. She was the first there. There were no other footsteps. The door had been tried by a ghost; and she went on until she came to the head of the stairs, at the foot of which her mother had been picked up dead. And as she looked down them her candle struck against something, and she saw that it was a halter hanging from the ceiling, with a noose in it, ready for any man to put his head into. Had there been a corpse as ghastly as that of Bewick's over the trout-stream in it, she could not have been more unutterably terrified. She

fled swiftly, with some member of the other world's skinny hand entwined in her back hair, with a view of detaining her and showing her a little more. But she was strong and resolute; and when she had got back to her bedroom, locked and bolted the door, put Carry's bed back, and found her back hair unruffled, she began to believe that she had been making a fool of herself, and thought she would go and look at her friends.

Mr. Akin was what you may call a violent sleeper. Like the famous Hackney-coachman of our youth, Tamaroo, whatever he did was done with fury and effusion. The frantic physical exertion which that young man had to go through in going to sleep would have ruined some constitutions. It was a University race to him going to sleep, and a ten-mile handicap (he starting from Scotch) for him to wake up again. At this time he was quiescent. He had taken off his velvetten coat, strangled himself with the arms round his neck, and suffocated himself by ramming his head into one of the hare-pockets. He likewise found it necessary to cross his left leg over his body, and hold on tight by his left boot with his right hand. It was impossible, in regarding this young man in his sleep, to avoid wondering what Mrs. Akin thought of it.

In a similar way, when one looked at Mr. Spicer at rest, one wondered whether Mrs. Spicer, in spite of accumulating wealth and good position, did not wish that there might be a few alterations in trifling details. For Mr. Spicer, though a quiet sleeper, lay on his back, and spread himself out in every possible direction, snoring magnificently. And, moreover, he talked in his sleep, very constantly, as people who sleep under constant expectation of being awakened always do. And Rebecca heard him say, as she watched them for a moment, "Jane's mother is a lie. The chaney and tea-spoons was give to you by word of mouth."

This was realistic enough to do away with the folly of the deserted staircase; her father's conduct dissipated her silly terror much more.

He was sitting up before his writing-table, examining papers and accounts. "Come in, old girl," he said. "Is there any news?"

"There is none yet, father," she said. "How are you to-night?"

"I am better, my love; hard at work, you see."

"Pa," she said, "is it wise of you to work?"

"My dear," he said, "believe an old man. Mere work never hurt any one in this world. Just look at the lives of our public men. Those who have lived the longest are generally found to have worked the hardest. Work don't kill: excitement does. This mechanical work which I am doing now is doing me more good than a doctor's shopful of medicine. Where have you been?"

"I have been frightened, father. I opened the door behind Carry's bed, and I got utterly terrified. There was a rope there with a noose to it, as though one was going to hang himself."

"You silly child, to frighten yourself with fancies when there is real danger abroad. That is the rope of the old bell which hangs in the cupola."

"Gracious me!" said Rebecca. "What a gaby I must have been not to think of *that*!"

"Did you see many ghosts?" said Mr. Turner.

"Heaps," said Rebecca.

"How many?"

"A dozen or two. One of them turned the handle of the door, under my nose."

"A ghost, you think? Be sure."

"Oh yes, a ghost. The dust on the staircase was quite undisturbed."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"Because we must mind that they do not get in *that* way."

"I will put my sheets on Carry's bed, and sleep there," said Rebecca.

"I would if I were you," said her father.

"Ho! They will not come to-night."

"Will they come at all, father?"

"They will most certainly come, one would fancy. But they will come soon, I should think. It is possible that they have been round the house to-night, and have seen us moving. Leave those two good fellows to sleep here for another night or so. We can reward them."

Morning dawned, and there was no sign of any burglary. Rebecca had a consultation with Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin before they went away.

"My opinion is, Miss," said Akin (and Spicer hung on his words as on those of an expert), "that they won't try it on until every thing is quiet. Is it plate, Miss, or is it jewels?"

"Neither," said Rebecca. "Papers."

Spicer and Akin looked at one another and laughed. "Lord love you, Miss; that accounts for the swell being in it. Papers, oh? He'll get another professional hand—we sprung one—and they will make a mess of it at last. Have you got a pistol, or any kind of fire-arm?"

"We have pistols; but I am a little afraid of them."

"Well, we will sleep here, turn and turn about, for a week. Arter that, if you hear any thing fire your pistol and we will be with you. The little dog is your best alarm. I wish you and your father slept closer together. You trust to us and the little dog."

"Do you know any thing about the part of our house which is shut up?" asked Rebecca.

"The part under the bell-tower, Miss? No, I don't, and I don't want to."

"Come with me, then," said Rebecca. "Good-morning, Mr. Spicer, and a hundred thanks."

Akin, left alone with Rebecca, exhibited a strange unwillingness to follow her. Still you would be utterly mistaken if you fancied that a cockney was neither chivalrous nor superstitious. He would sooner have fought any man within a mile than have followed Rebecca. He would sooner have seen a man privately hanged than have gone into the disused part of the house, "where the accident was."

But she took him to her bedroom. "You see, Mr. Akin, you know more of this sort of thing than I do." (He knew more than he need have done.) "I am going to put my bed across this door. Just move that bed, will you, and come with me."

Akin followed most unwillingly, though it was broad day. "Do you see these footsteps?" she asked, when they were in the passage; "they are mine last night. Do you see any others?"

"There have been no footsteps but those of

yourn for twenty years, Miss," said Akin, with emphasis. "Are you going any farther?"

"Yes," said Rebecca; "I want to see what is below."

And she led the way down the stairs, Akin following in the same state of mind as Shimei.

"You are quite right," she chattered, "the stairs are piled with dust. It was all my fancy last night about some one having got in here. There is not a foot-mark on the dust. See, here, at the bottom of the stairs, is a shoe with a blue rosette; I will have *that*."

"Come away, Miss, and leave it alone," said Akin, sharply; "there is ghostesses enough without yourn." For Akin had a shrewd suspicion that this shoe had been left there after the removal of Rebecca's mother from the very same place.

Rebecca got scared also, and came back with him somewhat hurriedly, with the ghost feeling at her back. But she brought the shoe with her too.

"If you put your bed across that door, Miss," said Akin, "as you propose, you stop 'em that way. I can't make out myself which way they will come. There is plenty if we leaves watching."

"Do you think they will come at all, Mr. Akin?" said Rebecca, confidentially.

"Will they come? I gather that there is forged papers. I gather that there is a swell with cash. I gather that the governor has those papers here. And that swell will come after those papers, with professional assistance, as sure as they apple-trees will blossom next April. Sooner or later he will have those papers. Why, if he will get two years for 'em, it stands to reason that he will chance three (and it's seldom more for a first offense), for stealing 'em. He'll come fast enough."

"What *can* poor father do?" said Rebecca.

"That is easy enough to tell," said Akin; "let your pa write to that swell, and say, 'Here, Tom,' and he says, 'you have been a-writing of other folks' names here, and I have got the writings. None of your gammon,' says your father; 'I've got your forged writing, and I'll Old Bailey you as sure as there is a Old Bailey.' Says your pa again, 'You have been a-hanging about my little place, and giving a world of trouble, keeping Akin and Spicer up all night, and my daughter and me sleeps habitual with Armstrong revolvers in consequence of your goings on. Why,' says your pa, 'you are a regular nuisance, that is about what you are. But I'll tell you what I'll do with you,' says your pa; 'you send me ten thousand pounds, notes of the Bank of England, and you shall have they documents. Not otherwise. There's been several rows,' says your pa, 'about convicted swells being kep' in the okum-yard, at the Ouse of Crection; but Portland is bleak for delicate constutions in the spring months, and the beaks themselves has been touched up in some of their speculations, and they mean Portland and nothing short.' That is what your father ought to say to this young swell. Your father, as a gentleman, would naturally dress it up, and draw it milder than an ignorant man like me. Still, I wish the plant was mine. I'd have the old girl to Ramsgate every year if it was."

"It might be yours," said Rebecca, suddenly, with that strange heedlessness which was the great fault in her.

"Don't say such dreadful things as those, Miss," said Akin, turning pale; "that ain't worthy of you."

"What have I said?" said Rebecca, aghast.

"What was wrote in that book, Miss, which you give us, about Charles Steward?"

"The Pretender, yes. What have I said?"

"It is wrote down in that book, Miss, that Charles Steward, who had been up to some game or other, I never made out what, had thirty thousand pounds set on his head. And he was loose among the Highlanders (a bad lot), and not one of them gave the pleece the office on him, not one out of all them—not for thirty thousand pound. And you would rank me lower than a common Highland drover."

"Dear Akin, I did not mean it. I spoke only in compliment. I *know* you would never turn on us. Please don't be angry."

There was a child in heaven who had left her footprints behind her, which prevented Jim ever being angry with Rebecca. Still she had heedlessly touched his honor. There is a mass of potential chivalry in this queer nation of ours, to which, under our present military *régime*, we do not get. I wish I had the Queen's commission to raise a regiment. Kingsley's foot should be as terrible as my grand-uncle Kingsley's horse. And equally queer in their antecedents, I doubt. I should trouble Lord Shaftesbury for about two dozen from Field Lane to begin with.

To Rebecca the next fortnight was actually worse than any time since the breaking of the Gresham bank. Her father had told her that the house would be broken into for the forged papers, which was one evidence, and Akin, a most experienced man, had confirmed his opinion emphatically. So she believed in it day after day less and less, and after Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin had taken to sleep at home she was quite comfortable. They were all wrong together. She had never really believed in it at all.

The weather might have been better, for even in this part of the metropolis it howled and raved. St. Swithin had been unpropitious, and the land was deluged and flown. Still, Mr. Morley was possibly safe, and wind was better than burglary.

"Pa," she said, one night, "they are not going to rob and murder us at all."

"I am glad to hear it, my dear; for I am getting very ill."

"Shall I sleep in your room, pa?"

"No. Let me have the little dog. That is a very dear little dog, Rebecca."

"You can have the dog, pa. She is very nice. Let me sleep in your room, dear."

"No, no," said Mr. Turner. "I am well enough, only I am very ill indeed."

"You have not been to the office for ten days, pa; you are not well."

"I am going to set out of the business, my love. It was too much for me."

"And the papers?" said Rebecca.

"You will hear about *them*," said he. And they went to their respective beds.

Rebecca, with her bed across the mysterious door, went to sleep and dreamed of absolutely nothing. She told Alfred Morley in aftertimes that she never dreamed less in her life than she did that night. After, as it seemed to her, a good night's sleep, she was awakened by what she thought was morning. But it was not morn-

ing at all. It was the light of a lantern on her face, held by a man with a black mask on, and two others behind him.

"Miss Turner," said this man, "we must trouble you to get up. If you speak we shall use violence."

"How on earth did they get in?" thought Rebecca. "This is your burglary, is it? I'll manage *your* business," she added to herself. "Mr. Philpott, you have no possible business in a lady's bedroom. If you only came after your own forgeries we should not care; but there are others. If you will retire I will go to my father, and *your* rascalities shall be put into your own hand."

Young Philpott took the key from the door without one solitary word and locked the door on the outside. The instant he did so Rebecca was out of bed. She wrapped herself in her dressing-gown, and pulling her bed aside, unlocked and unbolted the door, ran barefooted to the rope of the bell which hung in the turret.

Philpott heard the door unlocked, and ran in. But he was too late; the pluck and nerve of that solitary and defenseless girl had beaten his well-laid plot. The girl who was to have been intimidated, and held as hostage until the necessary papers were got from her father, had passed through their net. Instead of cowering among them in terror, she was pulling resolutely at a rope, and sending forth upon the night air clang, clang, clang, in a terrible staccato, which in old times would have brought thirty thousand men out of St. Antoine, and even now would people it with ghosts, if there were a St. Antoine—a tocsin which promised to rouse Walham Green, if not St. Antoine.

Her enemies were utterly beaten. Philpott (no fool) was prepared for both pluck and obstinacy; for such rapidly acting dexterity he was not prepared. The girl's brains were keener than his. He was unused to crime, and accustomed to music. When he heard his burglary proclaimed at midnight in an amorphous staccato (I am sorry to use bad language), he fled. When he thought of the courage and dexterity through which Rebecca had outwitted him, he fled faster for mere shame. The bell, disused and dumb for twenty years, went on clang, clang, clang, clang, proclaiming him to the world as a ruined gamester, who had staked all to keep his wife's respect, and had lost. The poor fellow fled away.

Lost through the courage and dexterity of an idle girl, who was going to be married to a Methodist parson—if he came back; but who had had messages from the sea which gave her sailor's courage, and sailor's recklessness. And she still went on ringing that horrible bell. And if he had gone back and cut her throat it would have been much the same. He had met with a nature more powerful than his own. He was beaten. His wife must know all now, and he was desperate, for he, potential felon as he was, did not trust her.

One hardly knows sometimes whether Providence is kind or unkind. In the end, it seems to me (and to others) that Providence always acts for the best. When you come to mere details, any one can say Providence should have done otherwise. One would say to those who question the government of this world that you

must wait. One would say to them, *par exemple*, was not the 2d December the seal of Democracy, not of wax, but of iron?

I have only a very poor little illustration to offer for my pretentious theory. It gets infinitesimally small as one looks at it. Still, granting that the little dog Mab was not brought into the world for nothing, you must grant this.

When Rebecca began clanging the bell Mab began to bark, and aroused Mr. Turner, who put on his trowsers, and got hold of his pistol. Coming out he met young Philpott in a mask, but knew him, and challenged him by name, holding his pistol toward him. Philpott, in his desperation, fired at him and wounded him, and Mr. Turner fell at the head of the stairs.

The whole district was gathered round now. Akin and Spicer were in and had Philpott and his accomplices in hand very quickly. Turner only said, "Let them go before the police come, and stop that bell. Where is Rebecca?"

Akin, the dextrous, assisted by Spicer, carried the captured men through Rebecca's bedroom to get down the back-stairs. On their way they came on Rebecca ringing away as hard as ever.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss, stop that noise," said Akin; "the parish engine's in the lane. Let us get these folks out this way. Is there any road this way?"

There was, it seemed, and Philpott and his friends were got out. There was nothing saved from the bankruptcy save his wife's fortune, and she knows nothing of his midnight meeting with Rebecca. To pleasanter matters.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TURNER SNUFFS THE SEA WIND.

THE neighborhood was aroused, and there were six engines in the lane. The parish engine, anxious to assert itself against the office engines, played upon the house for a little time, and then stopped and drove into imbecility. The other engines went home smoking pipes, and wondering why they had been sent for when there was no fire. The policeman had come to see what was the matter, and had been promptly turned out by Rebecca. The lane had gone to bed, on the theory that Mr. Turner had been took by his conscience in the night, and had rung the bell for prayers. There were more unconscious lies told that night than there are twice a year, and in the midst of it all Mr. Turner lay, severely wounded through the deltoid, and Rebecca minding him.

She had got singularly emphatic all of a sudden.

"Pa, you don't want a doctor from here?"

"No. All this must be kept quiet."

"You will die if you don't have one. Will you let me move you to Limehouse?"

"That is the best," he said, "good girl. We must take the safe."

"Lor bless you, yes, dear pa. We will take that fast enough. Bother the safe, I wish it was chucked in the water. You will have to move in an hour, pa."

"I wish I was well out of it," said he, "with the safe."

"You will be well out of it directly," she said. "Keep quiet."

She ran down to livery stables near by, and ordered a fly, to take her father away in half an hour's time. It was there punctually, and she hurried him in.

She had tied every thing she could find tight round his deltoid, and it is not a very difficult wound to stanch. He was very quiet, in that lethargic state which comes from loss of blood, and he cared nothing about any thing.

She looked back on the old house until they turned the lane. And she said, "There is an end of that, thank Heaven." He did not care at all. "Where are you taking me?" he said once.

"Limehouse," she answered. "9 Pilots Wharf. Keep quiet, or the hemorrhage will come on again."

"Where is Morley?" he asked, as they were going along Bird Cage Walk.

"At sea," she said. "Keep quiet. Every thing depends on your keeping absolutely quiet and trusting implicitly to me. Your wound is a severe one, and will be shortly followed by fever. You must be perfectly quiet."

When they were passing Tower Hill he said, "You are a brave, good girl, Rebecca. Where did you get your courage?"

"From Hetty," said Rebecca.

"Where did you see her, then?" said Mr. Turner.

"I have never seen her," said Rebecca, "and I don't suppose I ever shall. But she is Alfred's daughter. And I have made a daughter for Alfred who I suppose does not exist at all."

"Talk to me, darling," said Turner. "My own Rebecca, talk to me, for my wound is aching, and I am going to die. Let me hear you talk. What do you conceive about this Hetty?"

"Give me your wounded arm, father, and put it over my breast; lay your head on my breast; and if you keep quite quiet I will tell you what I have imagined Hetty to be. If I am wrong, do not deceive me."

"Hetty had no mother. Some girls have none. I had none."

"Hetty was a radical and a dissenter in her heart. For no person is a radical or a dissenter except from sentiment."

The wounded man said, "Radicals and dissenters form their opinion on pure reason."

"Hold your tongue, pa, or I will knock you. Hetty found herself, as a radical and a dissenter, bound hand and foot, by radical and dissenting hay-bands. And she broke them."

"And we all wished she had been at the bottom of Jordan when she did so," said the wounded man.

"But she was right in what she did, pa."

"No she wasn't," said he. "She is one of the most thundering fools on the face of the earth. I never heard of the girl doing any good that a coster-monger's wife could not have done. She has smashed her father's connection in our sect, and forced him abroad, for which you have to thank her; because I am going to die, and you will be all alone until he comes back."

"But she is good," said Rebecca.

"Many fools are," was the only reply she got.

Hetty had been tried as a subject of conversation, and had utterly failed. Their silence toward

one another was barely become oppressive, when they were at Morley's house.

Very few words were necessary from Rebecca to tell her story. They were at home at once. Mr. Morley's landlady was easily aroused, and it was bright summer morning, with the river gayly dancing on among the ships toward the sea, when Mr. Turner stepped out of his carriage and looked about him.

"Hush!" he said. "It is good for us to be here. What a lovely place to die in!"

"To get well in, I think you mean, father," said Rebecca.

"No I don't," said he. "There is but little business left me to do. That done I will go to sleep. I am sick of it all."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PILOT TERRACE.

A TIME now came which Rebecca has separated from all times in her life. Such a time may come again, she says, but it has not yet.

Ceaseless activity and care, ceaseless employment, ceaseless anxiety, ceaseless thought for others. A strange mixture of melancholy waiting for death and for life.

And all about and around, golden summer weather, bright water, moving ships, distant Kentish hill-sides basking in the sun. The tomb at Walham Green had given up the soul so long imprisoned there, and it had escaped not to useless idleness, but to anxious usefulness.

"As I saw him fading away, day after day, before my eyes, I loved him more and more, but, believing that he was going to his God, I do not think I was unhappy. I do not think I could be unhappy under any circumstances at Pilot Terrace."

The girl was not talking nonsense when she said this. Inbred in her nature was a love for brightness and motion, without which she was petulant and miserable. Hereditary proclivities are one of the few things which are absolutely certain; in the greatest number of instances the sire sets his seal upon the race, but in the case of a very strong will in the mother she may compete with her mate in the formation of characteristics. Rebecca's mother, coming of a stock which had been used to light gayety and music for centuries, had left this want with Rebecca as her legacy—the fortune on which she was to exist in the horrible prison at Walham Green. In addition to this precious legacy of her mother's, she had got from her father not only the virtue, determination, but the vice, obstinacy (as Carry well knew). And, furthermore, in addition to it all she had got—*God* knows where, I do not—some bright, clear spark of the divine nature, which made her very errors and indiscretions lovely.

Poor child. What if she ran away to Ramsgate, thereby violating a law never mentioned so far south as, and of course never dreamed of in, Philistia: she was very sorry afterward, and she took her most discreet and excellently beloved old nurse. Poor old Rebecca, when she found her duty ready to her hand she did it. Have we all done so?

She wanted light and beauty. She had seen dimly in old time the Popish worship with her

mother; and up to the time when she had run away to Ramsgate and seen the sea, that was the only beautiful thing she had seen. There was movement, light, brightness of color: the tinsel is as good as the gold to a child. She had dimly recollected it, in the long hours of Puritan seclusion at Walham Green. How long, oh my Puritan brothers, will you make religion hideous to one-half at least of your children? Think, in these days, when the nation is becoming educated to a rough love of light and beauty, what mischief you are doing, not to us, but to yourselves.

Rebecca says that the first pretty thing she saw when she was grown up was young Hartop the sailor. She always declares to Hetty that she was desperately in love with Hartop for a week, and that he used her disgracefully. However, Rebecca was worthy of seeing something more than a pretty sailor. She was capable of understanding real beauty, of the very highest form.

Mr. Morley. I would have made Mr. Morley a duke if I could, only for the simple fact that he was a dissenting minister, and considered unsound and unsafe even in that capacity. How many times that brown sailor-like face, that grizzled hair, and those steady brown eyes had passed before Rebecca's retina, before they were fixed on it forever, I do not know. But they were fixed there firmly enough now.

He was the first man, practically; who had ever introduced her to real light and beauty. She might have loved Hartop, but Hartop was for Hetty; and with her keen intellect she quickly found out this. That Hartop, brave, glorious, beautiful, was not so brave or so glorious as brown-faced Mr. Morley, with the slightly grizzled hair. "I would not change with Hetty," she said.

However, he was at sea, and she was all alone, and her father was dying, and she declares that she was not unhappy at this gaunt time, which lasted long. And that makes my explanatory sorites quite good enough for a well-told story.

She did well in every detail now. Quick, keen wits, once roused by love, seem to do without experience almost magically. The higher nature seems to descend to the level of the lower, intellect is assisted by instinct, Cupido by Eros. (A thinking friend of the writer says that I am utterly wrong, and that the love of the child for the parent is reflected. I give him this opportunity of adding to the amount of human knowledge.) Love and sympathy supplied experience. If all Sisters and trained nurses had had a conference with Gamp and Prig, they could have done no more for Mr. Turner than Rebecca did, with slight hints about details to the landlady.

I resume my story. She put his bed in the bow-window so that he could see the river and the ships. The landlady saw after him while Rebecca went out in the early morning until she could find a doctor. There were a dozen doctors close by, and the landlady recommended her to one, and Rebecca knocked him up.

He put a head out of window, and said:

"What do you want?"

And Rebecca said, "*He* won't do. Pa would never stand him."

Then she was going to pull at the bell of the

next doctor's, when the door was suddenly opened, and a fat gentleman of fifty said to her, "The advertisement said four o'clock, and it is half past. Come in." Whereupon she marched off; and thought, "You won't do, my gentleman."

"Bother the doctors," she said. "I wish—I beg your pardon, Sir," for she had run up against a queer little man with one leg shorter than the other, coming round a corner.

"Go away from me," he said, waving her off, "you most ridiculous and incautious young woman. I am one saturation of scarlet-fever from head to foot. I have been attending a scarlet-fever case, and I have pulled my pretty ones through. There are between eighty and ninety thousand sporicles on your fine velvet cloak at this moment; chuck it over your little sister's bed to keep her warm, and then say it was me."

"You will do," said Rebecca, emphatically.

"Well, I suppose so," said the little gentleman; "what do you want?"

"Pistol wound."

"My Heavens!" he said, turning his queer shrewd little face up to hers.

"Sir," she answered.

"Ho!" he said. "Ha! aristocratic, or long shore?"

"Neither. But mysterious."

"Young man dead?"

"No, but faint," said Rebecca.

"Ha! I'll get these fever clothes off and come directly. What is the house?"

"9 Pilot Terrace."

"Morley's? Yes, quite so. You are Miss Turner. I warned Morley that he was flying his kite too high. I told him that there would be bloodshed if he sought a wife among the Aristocrats. And my words have come true, you see. Well, you are a wise young lady in choosing him. I am a Romanist myself: Doctor Slop, you know; hey? Don't know your secret; of course not. I knew they would shoot some one over you."

"This has nothing to do with me," said Rebecca.

"Of course not," said Dr. Barnham. "Lord bless you, *we* know. Of course not. Bless you! call us Jesuits at one moment, and deny us common knowledge of the world at another. I'll change my fever clothes and come in."

The whole story of Mr. Turner's pistol wound was carefully explained to Dr. Barnham by at least three people; but he never believed it. He only said, "Yes! yes! quite so. We are men of the world, we Catholics."

But Barnham was a great acquisition to them. He treated Mr. Turner with great skill and *bonhomie*; and Mr. Turner loved him and waited for his coming. Both men were intensely in earnest; Barnham a violent ultramontane, Turner a violent Protestant. They used to argue furiously; the Bishop of Rome was alternately the old man of Rome on Mr. Turner's side, and something which one does not care to write about another human being on Dr. Barnham's. These two gentlemen used mutually to assure one another of the utter impossibility of the other's ultimate salvation, in a way which I dare not produce, not believing that God's mercy depends on a few details, as these men did. But they liked one another the better for all their

quarreling: and this quaint little Romanist was one of the brightest things in their new short life.

Turner would be in the bay-window, looking at the ships going to and fro, and would invent arguments against the doctor. And he would say to Rebecca, "Come, old girl, give a hand next time, and we will smash him, and put an end to him."

And Rebecca would laugh, and cower down by her father, and say, "I won't say one word against him. And you know that you love him in your heart."

He was indeed the only educated friend they had. Mr. Turner was quietly falling away day after day, and finding his time getting short, he wrote notes to several people calling on them to come.

Lord Ducetoy was the first. "How de do, my lord?" said Turner. "I have summoned up the phantom."

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD DUCETOY'S PROPOSALS.

HERE first she began to learn the artistic value and beauty of tones, crossed indefinitely by other tones, perfectly harmonious, and sometimes without incident. At times of the night when the tide was even brimming full, and she was watching, she would open the window, and hear the sounds of the river, all melted into one, and assisted by the dull under-tone of the city. At first, in her ignorance and her cockneyishness, she had thought that the city was the sea; and that the eternal crawling hum, waxing and waning in the night, was the crawling of the breakers upon the shore; but Lord Ducetoy, standing in the balcony with her one evening, laughed at her for thinking so, and pointed out her mistake.

"But water runs down hill, my lord; and the water is running that way."

"My fair cockney cousin, do you not notice that it runs the other way sometimes?"

Yes, it was so. Her beloved sea was further off than she thought, and it was silent to her. He was right. She had mistaken the music of the hated city for the dim, far-heard melody of the free sea.

"Do you ever sail upon the sea, my lord?" she said.

"Not at present, my lady," he answered.

"Your good father has given me the means of keeping a yacht, and when the king has his own again perhaps you will sail with me. Have you heard from Mr. Morley?"

"Not one word. Nor from Hartop or Hetty, either. I am all alone, with my father."

"Except for me," he said.

"Except for you," she answered, looking straight at him; "exactly. It is very kind of you to come here and see us."

"Now, Rebecca, I want to have a serious talk with you. I shall offend you deeply, I know; but a man must speak what is in him, or—"

"Hold his tongue."

"Exactly. I am not going to hold mine. Rebecca, do you know that I love you heartily?"

"I thought you did, and I am very glad. I suppose there is not the wildest chance of my ever seeing Lady Ducetoy?"

"Not if you go to the South Sea Islands. But, Rebecca, do you love me?"

"Very much indeed."

Dead stop. Rebecca had some dim idea that he was going to make a fool of himself; and *she* was not going to help him.

"I suppose," he said, in a very awkward manner, "that no one was ever placed in a more difficult position than I am at this present moment."

Rebecca merely stood and looked at him.

"You see, I don't know how to begin."

"Well, then, don't begin," said Rebecca.

"No one wants you to."

"Yes, but you don't know. I have a great personal admiration for you, and I am your cousin, and I think you an uncommonly gentlemanly old fellow, one of the most splendid creatures, and one of the most admirably formed ladies I have ever met. Now, cousin Rebecca, I am under terribly great obligations to you for your gallantry. I don't know what your father has done for me, or how his affairs are. Tell me one thing; what money shall you have when you marry Mr. Morley?"

Rebecca gave a gasp of relief; she was afraid that he was going to talk some sentimental nonsense. "I don't suppose we shall have any," she said. "Hagbut has drained away pa's cash for Carry's settlements. I should have liked to take him money, and yet I shouldn't."

"I don't understand," said Lord Ducetoy.

"Can't you see that, cousin? I should like to take him money, because I should like him to have money for his works and his charities, for which he lives. Yet I should also like to go to him, cousin, saying, 'You chose me, and here I am, without one penny. Will you take me still?' And he would. And he would love me better without the money than with it. For if I had all Carry's money it would only be a cloud between us. He, the noblest man in all the world, has honored poor little me, with all my indiscretions and errors, above all women in the world. And I would sooner go to him *in formâ pauperis*. You are talking to an attorney's daughter, you know."

"But Rebecca, do you mean to say that you would sooner marry a mere dissenting clergyman without money than with? It is totally incredible to me why you should marry him at all: but without the power over him which money could give. Are you mad?"

"Not in the least. When you find in your order as fine a gentleman as Alfred Morley I shall be glad to hear from you."

"He must be an exception."

"Of course he is," said she. "There is another exception coming to plague pa. Stay and see the other exception, and finish what you were going to say."

"Well, Rebecca, I only wanted to know this. If money should run short with you, will you accept some from me?"

"Certainly," said Rebecca. "I am very much obliged to you. Some of your money may come in very useful, if pa has been drawn dry by *him*, and if we have not got any of it. We should be very glad of some of yours under those circumstances."

"A few thousands," began Lord Ducetoy.

"Thousands!" said Rebecca, laughing. "If

you can find us £150 some day, it is quite as much as we are fit to be trusted with. Don't give Alfred Morley more. He would only give it away. Tell me. Is this offer of money all you were going to say to me when you began?"

"It was all, indeed."

"Bless me, I thought you were going to talk nonsense to me. You were not, were you?"

"I assure you, Rebecca, that I had not the least intention of doing so."

"Quite sure?"

"I am not quite sure that you are sane in dreaming of such a thing. Come, you are the very last person on the face of the earth that I would dare to talk nonsense to. How Mr. Morley got into his present position with you I don't know. I would not have dared to say as much as he has dared. Cousin, I only wanted to try and help you, and you are so very quaint and *emportée* that I had to beat about the bush. I was a little in love with you once, but I have quite got over any little sentimental feeling of that sort."

They had come into the upper room out of the balcony as he said this, and she said, "Bend down your head, my lord." And he bent it down to her and she kissed him, saying, "You are a good man, cousin, and we understand one another."

And if any one thinks she was wrong, I happen to disagree with them.

Since Eve kissed her first-born (unfortunately for the illustration, *Cain*, I believe, unless some new state papers have been grubbed out at Fetter Lane or Simancas to the contrary) no purer kiss was given or received than Rebecca gave to Lord Ducetoy. And he, being a gentleman, knew it.

"Now let us come down stairs," she said.

"You have spoken of Mr. Morley as a dissenting minister. As if they were all alike. As if you Nobles were all alike." And she gave illustrations. "Come and see what I have escaped, will you?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

BREAKING WINDOWS.

WHY do people break windows? Some do it to get locked up; but I do not mean them. Why do people who do not want to be locked up at all habitually break windows? Who breaks windows? Every one. You, and I, and Rebecca. You and I are wise people, and hold our hands from a window, unless we can get something by breaking it. Now Rebecca was a fool, and never could keep her hands off a window. Morley said she was nearly as bad as Hetty.

There is something very exasperating to a certain kind of mind in a smooth square of plate-glass. One does not demand much, one only demands what nature will give, at any point, at any time of the year. Half and quarter tints, melting into one another, yet making a great harmony, and an "arrangement," as great as Turner's Heidelberg. That was all Rebecca wanted, though she had never seen it, and could not tell you exactly what she did want. She knew, however, that plate-glass with gas behind it exasperated her. So she was given to window breaking.

One says she had never learned the subtle, in-

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GREAT HETTY MYSTERY CLEARED UP.

terminable delight and beauty of half tints. It is not true. She had learned it from Mr. Morley's grizzled head and brown face. And now she came down stairs with Lord Ducetoy of the prairies, thinking about Morley of the sea: of men with an inconceivable number of half and quarter loves about them: and she found Hagbut and Carry; plate-glass and gas. A window, a bald, shallow window. She instantaneously broke it, with the first stone she could find—and you can generally find a stone if you stoop down.

It was very naughty of her. I offer no defense. I am not bound to carry a heroine through every thing. Still Hagbut and Carry, sitting in a row, drinking tea and smiling, were not calculated to make any one the less petulant.

"Where have you been, Rebecca?" said her father.

"Up stairs, with Lord Ducetoy."

"Did you hear Mr. Hagbut come in?"

"Yes, I heard him."

"Where were you?"

"In the upper passage, kissing Lord Ducetoy."

"Becky, old girl," said Mr. Turner. "Don't say such things."

"Why not? You ought to tell the truth, ought you not? And I *was* kissing Lord Ducetoy on the stairs."

Hagbut said, very quietly, "For my part, not being a gentleman myself, I am uneasy in the company of even an ordinary gentleman, still more so in the company of a nobleman. However, by your confession of having kissed his lordship on the stairs, my elephantine awkwardness is somewhat easier to bear. About the outrageous impropriety of the thing happening at all, and of Rebecca telling about it afterward, I say nothing. But from all I can hear, two very good people have kissed one another, and are not ashamed of it either."

Lord Ducetoy laughed aloud. "It was *her*, you know, Padre, mind that. *She* kissed *me* in the passage. You believe me, I am sure."

"My lord, I am bound to believe the statement of any hereditary legislator, the more particularly in this case because I am perfectly certain that you would never have obtained the favor on your own account."

Carry sat utterly aghast. Lord Ducetoy had kissed Becky in the passage, and they were all making fun of it. Her husband was laughing, and Becky and Lord Ducetoy were smiling. *She* began to cry.

Hagbut did not attend to her at first, for his eyes were fixed on Mr. Turner. He turned suddenly on Carry and ordered her to run for the doctor.

"Rebecca, look at your father," he said. "Good heavens and earth! it can't be so, while we have been chattering nonsense here. Go away, Rebecca, go and fetch the landlady, or the surgeon, or the fire-engine, or some one. My lord, things have gone wrong here. Are you afraid of death?"

"Is he dead?" said Lord Ducetoy.

Poor old Turner. He was dead enough. The life, fierce at first in its vitality, nay, some said wild, had come to an almost eventless end. He had died in his chair quite quietly. A nobleman and a dissenting minister were carrying his body to a sofa, and a scared, beautiful daughter, looking on death now for the first time, was holding the candle. That was the end and finish of it all.

"Worth?" Yes. "Silence?" Beyond that of most. "Ambition?" Yes. "Money?" Enough. "Love?" Ay, and hate too. We shall never know *that* story. "Respect in the world?" More than most. "Capabilities of enjoyment?" Very great, but never exercised. "Religion?" That is no matter here, just now, when Ducetoy the Puseyite and Hagbut the Dissenter are carrying him to the sofa. One of his shoes fell off, and Rebecca picked it up and tried to put it on.

"It is of no use to do that," said Lord Ducetoy.

No use to put on his shoe. Not one bit. There had come an end and finish. The man, as known to sight and touch, was utterly gone, with all his works and ways, bearing the consequences with him. The very tree in front of the house would last longer than he. A few days and the very image must be hidden in the earth. Shall we ever dare to appreciate the memory of death? Shall we ever dare to deduce the great future of the soul from the contempt which our good God shows toward this poor pretty toy of a body which he has lent us?

He was *dead*. Shut your eyes for only one minute, and think of it. At one time all a man's schemes and plots, honorable and other, must come to an end! The man, as you knew him, must be quickly put out of the way and hidden; the man exists no more. Who can wonder at Religion being the one thing which people are most furious about? That terror of utter annihilation which produced the slightly illogical Phædo, is the basis of all religions. There is only one tribe in the world, so far as I know, who disbelieve in a future state, and it would be unpolite to name them.

However, Turner, with all his sins and virtues, was, to his scared daughter, no more than a heap of bones and flesh. No wrong which one had ever done the other could be righted *now*. It was all over. She had no means of believing that they would ever meet again. Her religion denied her the shocking and yet beautifully tender superstition of masses for his soul; she had been trained in too sharp a school to believe that Divine mercy could be bought with music and candles. She only thought that her father had done his best, and that God would have mercy on him. In her terror, in her dumb, stunned grief, she would have asked even Hagbut about her father's future; but his people had told her so many cruel things that she feared he might say that her father was in hell, and she also very much feared that she should believe it; and so she merely hung round his body tenderly, without one solitary tear as yet, and moaned to herself, "Alfred! Alfred!"

But Morley was far away on the wild sea.

There was no hope from him; and it was no use lying on the floor beside the corpse, which was on the sofa, and saying at intervals, in a whisper, ghostly from want of hope, "Pa!" That was obviously no good whatever. All kinds of methods have been tried for speaking with the dead, but I have never heard of one which has succeeded.

Moaning inarticulately with all the weight of what might have been between her and that poor corpse, weighing on her more and more as the minutes went on, she lay dumb and tearless. Lord Ducetoy and Mr. Hagbut, with that delicacy of manhood, which is nearly as fine as that of womanhood, left her alone, and staid about the house whispering. Carry had been hurried out of the house (being in an interesting condition), not having the least idea that her father was dead. What to do with the moaning tearless Rebecca was becoming a puzzle to Lord Ducetoy. Hagbut was perfectly calm, and only said, "Wait, my lord. She will have faces round her soon which she will know. I was to preach here to-night, and I have ordered some women of my communion, who are come to hear me, to come to her."

Rebecca had nearly moaned herself to sleep on the hard floor, when she felt a kind, gentle arm round her waist, and heard a very gentle voice say, "My love, come with me. Get up."

"I will be very obedient," said Rebecca. "I was wrong to go to Ramsgate. Now that death is here, I know it. Alfred Morley has forgiven me, and pa forgave me too. I will go to Waltham Green, and ask forgiveness of all. I am sure even Miss Soper would forgive me now."

"My sweet child, my own bonny girl," said old Soper; "what have I to forgive? You have got to forgive an ill-tempered old maid, driven wild by girls. Come away, dear, and scold me. See here is Mrs. Russel; you will come with us, won't you?"

"Pretty sweet-heart," said Mrs. Russel; "come with us. We never hit it off together yet, but we will do so for the future. Becky, my pretty love, come and lie down."

All the well-written, or well-talked sentimentality in the world could never have had the effect which the kindness of these two old women had on Rebecca. The rock was smitten, and the tears came forth.

Soper and Russel behaved gloriously. Soper never yielded an inch in her principles. Rebecca had once done a thing which, if done too often, would entirely ruin the ladies' school business, for which Soper had a sentimental regard, seeing that she had made a modest competence out of it. About the Ramsgate business Soper nailed her colors to the mast; but on all other points she gave way, and turned out the thoroughly good fellow which she really was. Russel and she staid in the house until the end, and as they never got on from one week's end to another without a squabble, they naturally had one here.

Russel said one evening at tea that Rebecca would be all alone now. Mr. Hagbut was not likely to let Carry see much of her, and she would be alone.

"A good job too," said Soper. "I hate Carry."

"She is a well-conducted girl," said Russel.

"Her sister is worth ten of her," said Soper,

the experienced. "Don't talk nonsense. If Rebecca was a barrack-master's daughter (you don't know what that means, I suppose?) there would never be a scandal about her."

Russel was so used to getting her old ears boxed by Soper that she submitted as usual, and said, "You know best, my dear, of course. That Morley's daughter, that Hetty, will be home soon, and she will be thrown against Rebecca. I suppose you will be saying next that you approve of that."

"Yes, I shall," said Soper. "I have retired from business, and sold my connection. I'll say that. There are girls and girls, and we in our trade don't study that enough. Yes, I'll say that," said Soper, rubbing her nose. "I don't want to injure the woman's business who bought my school; but I will say as much as that."

"Don't be angry, my dear," said Russel.

"I shall, if I choose. Morley's daughter is the best companion for Morley's wife."

"After what she has done?" cried Russel.

"What *has* she done?" asked Soper.

"Outraged every law of respectability," said Mrs. Russel, stoutly. "O Lord! look there."

It was only Rebecca in her dressing-gown, looking certainly very ghostly.

"My dear friends," she said, "is there any thing wrong?"

"Yes," said Russel; "Miss Soper is backing up Hetty."

"And I don't see why I should not," said Soper; "the girl was plagued out of her life, and rebelled. Morley had not any money to give her, and she went honestly and bravely away to get money to keep herself and to help him. And she went as stewardess on board a Scotch steamer; and she went as stewardess on board an American steamer; and she got money; and she got prestige for business habits; and she prospered. She is a noble soul, that is about what she is, and those who decry her are fools."

"Fool is a strong word," said Mrs. Russel.

"Come, tell the whole truth."

"About her shipwrecks? About her heroism?"

"You know what I mean," said Russel.

"About the *Lord Clyde*? Yes, I will tell Becky about that. Now, my dear, you shall have the very whole of it. Hetty, long a disgrace to our respectable connection, in consequence of her—a minister's daughter—lowering herself so far as to go to sea as a stewardess. In our connection, my dear, as in some others, we never lower ourselves so far as to marry into the ministry. Mr. Spurgeon pointed out that last week. But we expect our ministers' daughters to keep their rank. Hetty Morley violated our traditions, and did worse."

"I am sure she did no wrong," said Rebecca.

"Oh, didn't she?" said Soper, now venomous.

"If there was a Northern sympathizer in this world it was Alfred Morley. If any sect in Catholic Europe was more united than ours on the subject of hatred to the slave-owners of the South it was ours. Hartop, the man to whom she was engaged, was an open favorer of the Northern States. What did Hetty do? Flew in the face of her father, her lover, and her connection, and run the blockade into Charleston."

"Is that all she has done?" asked Rebecca.

"Enough, too," said Soper, now very angry

indeed. "Disgraced herself by taking service as a stewardess; and then, on sentimental grounds, assisting Jezebels of slavery into that strong-hold of abomination, Charleston."

I believe that it was the late great and good President Lincoln who first said that you could do nothing with a woman when her back was up. You could do nothing with Soper now. Her major premiss was "Humbag," and she never got to her minor, and dropped grammar in her fury.

"That *Lord Clyde*," she said, "was took for blockade running. And Hetty Morley was stewardess aboard of her, in the *Clyde*. And there comes two ladies, one big with child. And they says mutually about one another: 'My husband's killed,' one on 'em says; 'and hers,' pointing to the one in the family-way, 'he is wounded.' 'Do you know the danger?' says the skipper. 'I am uncommon deep this time, and they have built a gun-boat to catch me: and I doubt I can't take ladies.'"

"Stop your story, Miss Soper," said Mrs. Russel. "It's too much for her."

Rebecca, perfectly white, and a little wild, was staring at Miss Soper. The experienced Soper looked at her one instant and went on.

"It won't hurt you to tell. It will draw your mind from what is up stairs. The skipper said, 'I can't take ladies.' They says, 'But us. Think on us,' they said. 'For the memory of your mother take us.' And the one whose husband was alive said, 'She can't see him again, but I may see my man.' And the skipper said, 'You two will never get through without some other women. I expect to be took this time. And our stewardess is ordered not to go. I won't trust myself with you without her.' And he asked Hetty: and Hetty said 'Willing.' And she went; and all I say is, that God went with her. That is what Hetty did."

"Did the two slave-owning ladies get safe in?" asked Rebecca.

"Yes," said the violent emancipationist Soper, triumphantly; "they did, thank God."

"Thank God, also," said Rebecca. "Tell us the rest of what Hetty did."

"Not much," said Soper, "except behaving like an Englishwoman. The *Lord Clyde* was deep, and touched the ground under a battery, and she was wounded in the face by the splinter of a shell; but she stood to her work plucky until the very last."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WAITING BY THE TIDE.

THE little tale is nearly told. A little more trouble. A little more heart gnawing, weary waiting, and our bold wild hawk will have been purged from the fault, mainly brought on her by her old unsuitable life, and our once wild peregrine shall be tamed. She shall stoop to the master's wrist directly; no lure needed any longer. No need for jesses, hood, or bell; she shall perch upon his wrist, I promise you, and then she shall spread her pretty wings and fly away across the sea toward the morning.

I tried hard to make you like her from the very first; but she was a naughty girl, I doubt.

Yet love had done for her what law never did, and she was good enough now, poor child, left all alone.

All alone! Why, no. She could never be alone any more now. Her soul had been awakened in the light of a new dawn, to which the flaming primrose of Australian morning is but darkness. The sentimental love and admiration for one grayish-headed man, now alone upon the broad weltering sea, a love which, fed on absence, had wrought such a change in her that she found her body transformed into a temple of new hopes and fears, new sympathies and anxieties. She was *living*, so she could never be alone.

She had money now, nearly £4000. Mr. Hagbut, as one of her father's executors, had done better by her than he was absolutely warranted by law: of that she never knew. "How on earth," said Lord Ducetoy to her once, "do you manage to get eight per cent. for your money? I can't." *Hagbut* knew. That frank, Americanized young nobleman consulted her often on business matters relating to his approaching marriage, declaring that he was certain that her father's genius for business must have descended on her. The most he made by it, however, was being loosed of £20 for the Sailors' Orphans' Home.

For she was waiting by the tide for her man at sea who came not, and sent no message or sign. Her life was the life of the sea-folks now. The good Tibbeys from Chelsea had more than once come to see her, and had begged her to come to them; but her answer was always the same: "That life is dead and past. I am waiting by the tide, my dears, for him who is at sea. I will never go westward again into that wilderness. I wait upon the shore for him, and I think he will come back to me. If he does not, I will wait still."

Carry and Mrs. Russel said that poor Rebecca was moping herself to death all alone down at Limehouse. Now, on the other hand, Miss Soper, whose father was dead, having had a look or two at Limehouse, took apartments there, and, carrying her mother down, established herself; thereby emphatically proving her opinion of the difference between Walham Green and Limehouse. The split between herself and Carry and Russel was complete.

"Rebecca," said the old schoolmistress, "is worth the lot of you put together. The girl is doing hard work and good work, and I have been used to hard work since I was fourteen"—(as, indeed, she had)—"and I am going to do some more of it. Mrs. Russel, it is the want of hard work which has spoiled my temper and yours; and it will spoil yours, too, Mrs. Hagbut." The two saw very little of her after this.

I am not Homer, and so I can not describe the fearful battles which went on between Miss Soper and Doctor Barnham, the Papist. The number of times a day which they announced one another's ultimate destruction was something fearful. But they were excellent good friends, and worked together admirably, in the little sharp attack of cholera in that year; partly, I think, from jealousy, to see who could do most.

So it came to pass that Rebecca saw more of her old enemy than ever she had done before. And when she came to compare Soper's life with her own, she felt herself a very worthless person.

The very first and purest pleasure which Rebecca got, when she had settled down, was a certain school for sailors' children, got together and kept together by a fat old woman, Mrs. Frump. She founded it, she taught it (mainly), she managed it, and she paid for it. *She* was it. Soper grubbed out the story about it; and it was, that her son had gone away, and had been lost in a "cyphoon," leaving her two infant children to educate. And Mrs. Frump had decided that it was best that the children should have company. And so the school had grown from two sailors' orphans to twenty-eight sailors' children, whose fathers might return, or, on the other hand, might not. And it was by the tide-way, and the little ones could see the ships as they passed close by.

It was one of those temporary schools, kept together by the force of character of a single person; and which, when God thinks fit to say to that person, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," break up and go to pieces, and are heard of no more.

Yet their good works live after them. I am not foolish enough, of course, to say for an instant that unorganized schools, dependent on mere individuals, should in any way take the place of organized schools; yet I say thus much about such schools as this, which I have known, that they have impressed a certain *die* of character on the children taught there, and have deserved well of the state. Nay, more: I believe, that on the last great gathering, when one of the founders and keepers of these schools shall come up for judgment, and the Great One shall say, "Who will speak for this man?" hundreds of white hands will be held up out of the crowd, and their owners will say, "Lord, he showed us the way to thy Son."

Well, that is only my opinion about those schools. We are getting too serious, I fear.

Rebecca watched old Frump as a cat watches a mouse. But she was a determined old girl, our Rebecca, and intended to have her wicked will of Frump. She confronted Frump in the street one day, and asked her if she might come and teach in her school.

Frump eyed her over from top to toe, and said, "Why?"

Rebecca was perfectly ready for her. She told Frump the whole of her story from beginning to end; and, in conclusion, said, pitifully, "Please, let me help."

"Humph!" said Frump; "as a general rule I don't like Dissenters round my place. But you have got the right kind of eye, and I know Morley. You can come, if you like."

"I thank you very much," said Rebecca.

"Are you fond of your tea, child?" asked Frump.

"Yes, I like it *very* much," said Rebecca.

"Then you had better come along and have some of it with me," said Frump.

And at tea Rebecca explained to Frump that her father had been a Dissenter and her mother a Papist. Frump was inclined, on the whole, to look on this in the light of a good cross; not like the orthodox thing certainly, but not so very bad. She cautioned Rebecca carefully about the expression of unorthodox opinions on one side or the other. Rebecca promised strict obedience; and they became good friends.

So she got among the pretty, innocent sailors' children, and loved them, and worked diligently among them, not only for their own sweet sakes, but for the sake of her own dear sailor far away upon the wild sea.

Another thing which raised her soul much in these times was this: the ritualisms of the sect to which she clung were not bald and barren to her here, as they were at Walham Green. She craved for light and music in her ritual; and to some extent she got it here. The light was in the upturned eyes of the little congregation, the music was got by the rushing of the wind and the lapping of the tide outside the chapel.

But there was a great attraction in her chapel just now. A young missionary had come home, having lost his wife in some wild attempt to spread Christianity in some dim spot on the Cengr, where the Capuchins and Jesuits had failed 200 years before. A wild young man with a tangled head, blazing black eyes, a bad heart-disease, a precarious income of £58 a year, and what I choose to call a golden faith. This young man had gone through more troubles than St. Paul himself, and had come home to take Morley's duty. Barnham, the Papist, told Miss Soper that that man was a loss to the Catholic Church, for that he preached the Real Presence, as in *his* language he most certainly did. She, Soper, was *furiosus*, but Dr. Barnham was a great deal too strong for her, Soper not being able from her professions to urge *petitio principii* against him, and leaving him free to argue from their common major.

Frump, however, retired on the lines of Torres Vedras, until the country should be wasted before her. Her lines were, that young Jones, the Dissenting missionary, was a Jesuit in disguise. Which was a safe thing to say.

But in spite of the rather singular things which this tangled-headed young man said about the necessity of baptism, the inconceivable sin of falling away from grace, and the (practically) ultra-Romish views of the communion, Rebecca loved to hear this young man preach. For there was an earnest fury about every word of his which took her heart, and his words carried with them the scent of the distant sea, the waves of which wandered over his dead wife's coffin.

So, busy and active, yet perfectly peaceful, still she waited for Alfred Morley beside the tide.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HETTY AT LAST.

So Rebecca hung on, doing the work which God in his kindness had given her. Waiting by the tide, month after month, for a message from the sea.

When the wind was very wild, and the rain beat upon the glass, she would get up and do as she had now so often seen the sailors' wives do, walk up and down the room with her arms tightly folded; thinking of the man she loved at sea.

It was a very wild fierce night six months after she came there, and was very late. She had not long come in, after making one of some eighty women who had been out in the rain and the wild weather to see an accident. Cap-

tain Moriarty had driven from his moorings in the gale, and caused an alarm as great as if the Houses of Parliament were afire. Rebecca had ended with a hearty laugh when all things were put straight, and had come home to her solitary supper of bread and cheese; and the wind was very wild, and her heart was very heavy, and she ate her supper walking up and down, and, I am very much afraid, crying.

The door was opened, and a voice coming from a figure which she could not see, said, "If you please, Miss, old Job Partridge, of the *Mary Ann*, is much worse, and wants to see you immediately."

"I will be with you directly," said Rebecca; "how far is it?"

"About a mile straight in the teeth of the wind, and it is raining cats, dogs, marlin-spikes, and copper sheathing," said the voice.

"I will be with you in two minutes," said Rebecca. "I have been out and got my hair wet, and have been drying it. Mr. Moriarty has lost his moorings, but he has been brought up by a hawser from the *Elizabeth* now. I will not detain you an instant."

The voice said, in the most emphatic manner, "You will do," and out of the darkness came a young woman shorter than herself, who put her two hands on Rebecca's shoulders, and looked up, and Rebecca knew in an instant that she was looking on a beauty more splendid than her own.

She was perfectly amazed, and stammered out, "Is it, is it—"

"Of course it is, my dear soul."

"Is it *Hetty*?" said Rebecca.

"Of course it is, my dear. Who else did you think it was? Now have a good look at me. Look at me," said Hetty; and Rebecca did so, with fixed eyes and open mouth, for this mysterious long-concealed Hetty was the strangest creature she had ever seen in her life.

She was dressed in close-fitting sailor's blue, and had just taken a sailor's tarpaulin hat off her head, and shaken out her hair; it was a crown of dark chestnut. In features, more particularly in the quaint, beautiful mouth, turned habitually up at the corners, she resembled very closely Sir Joshua's *Muscipula*; as she shaded her great hazel eyes with her hand, to get a good look at Rebecca, Rebecca saw that she was like her father, but also like some one she had never seen.

Rebecca was dazed and stunned at the apparition. She had loved beauty deeply, and been told that Hetty was beautiful; but she was not prepared for *this*. And where did the girl get that wondrous, tender, pathetic *expression* from, almost as strange as her beauty? Rebecca soon knew whence came that look.

"Rebecca, dear," said Hetty, "God is sending Jack and I a little one. Will you nurse me until it is born, and I am fit to go afloat again?"

That was all she said, and Rebecca said exactly nothing at all; but she laughed such a happy laugh that Hetty laughed again; and kissing her, and shaking the rain-drops from her hair, sat down upon the easy-chair and demanded tea.

The seed-time of Rebecca's life had been hard and bitter, but the harvest was beginning now. Beginning in doubt, trouble, anxiety, but in deep glorious happiness. She was getting a share in the great life which was moving about her. The arrival of this strange, beautiful storm-bird from

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the wild sea was now, to her, a deeper, more intense pleasure than all the castles, broughams, opera-boxes, and diamonds that any lady ever had in this world.

"I think we shall be very fond of one another," said Hetty.

"That is quite my opinion," said Rebecca.

"Where have you been, Hetty?"

"Stopping round," said Hetty. "I am perfectly sick and tired of these clipper ships; and I declare most positively, that when what is going to happen has happened I will never put my kit on board of another. Jack, thank Heaven, has got one of the old sort."

"Has he got a ship?" said Rebecca, eagerly.

"Certainly he has," said Hetty.

"And where is Jack gone?" asked Rebecca.

"Callao, for orders," said Hetty; "that, he says, expresses, in sailors' language, Greek Kalends. Ships cleared for Callao never know where they are going; it may be Melbourne, and it may be Hong-Kong—one as likely as the other. I shall not see him for a year."

"Are you not impatient?" asked Rebecca.

"My good soul, if sailors' wives were to get impatient they would go mad. I have laid my heart and soul at the feet of one sailor, and you have laid yours at the feet of another. Sailors' wives must know how to wait and suffer. And if you have a common religion, if you believe that there is no cloud at death between you and your husband, you can get through any thing. That is the case between Jack and myself."

"Yes," said Rebecca, and there was a great deal in her Yes.

"Now," said Hetty, "I am going to tell you a thing which will make you very angry and make you hate me. Jack has openly joined the Church of England, and I have gone with him."

"Why not, Hetty?" said Rebecca, turning her face to Hetty.

"Why not?" said Hetty. "Why, of all the indiscretions I ever committed, this is the worst. I hope you will not be so foolish as I have been."

"Why not?" said Rebecca.

"Because you would cut the last ground from under my father's feet. Rebecca, you have a noble soul committed to your care, for which you will have to answer at the Day of Judgment. Follow him—do not lead him. A led man is an ill thing. I have been to sea, and I know."

Here there was an interruption; Mrs. Tryon stood at the door.

"Now then, Miss Turner; you are talking her to death. Het, old girl, how are you? You did right to come home to Miss Turner and I, though Miss Turner is a fool."

"I have known that for a long time," said Rebecca, quietly; for Mrs. Tryon had called her a fool in a way which did not give offense. There are different ways of calling people fools.

"Where is your man gone?" said Mrs. Tryon to Hetty.

"To Callao for orders," said Hetty.

"He is a fool, and you were a fool for letting him go," said Tryon.

"Don't talk nonsense, my dear soul," said Hetty. "You may think it fine, but we do not."

"Is he going through the Straits or round the Horn?" asked Tryon.

"Round the Horn," said Hetty. "His ship would never beat through the Straits, she is bad

to get about. I did not like his crew myself. Too many Malays. I don't like it altogether, and the ship is, I doubt, wet; and in my opinion, Mrs. Tryon, she is extremely over-spurred. Why, Jack told me himself that she had broke her main-yard lift by sheer rolling, and dropped it on to the slings."

"Those iron lifts are all rubbish," said Mrs. Tryon.

"I know that," said Hetty; "but that does not make amends for Jack's carrying on round the Horn with iron lifts. And his ship's bows are too far aft, so that she don't seem as though she would lift well with a reefed foresail, when she is going before it. As for laying her to in a gale of wind, my dear, if I was on board of her when Jack proposed to do it I should get out and walk."

"Look at her," said Tryon, quietly.

It was Rebecca to whom she called attention. She had gone to sleep on the floor with her head on a hassock. "Pretty sweet," said Tryon. "Have you heard any thing of Morley, dear?"

"Speak very low," said Hetty. "Pa has gone on to Patagonia in the *Eliza*. And the *Sydney Herald* says that they are all dead."

"You don't believe it, dear?" said Mrs. Tryon.

"Of course I don't," said Hetty. "Jack says that he don't believe a *thingamj* of it."

This is the way religious sailors' wives talk confidentially, ladies and gentlemen. Of course they ought not to do so, but they do it.

"I don't believe a solitary word of it," said Tryon. "But that Patagonian coast is a awful bad 'un. Look how sweet she sleeps, pretty love, pretty dear!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

THERE came a long time now while Rebecca and Hetty abode together like Ruth and Naomi. But all danger to Rebecca was over in the presence of a necessity greater than her own. Her own self was dead and ended, and she had three others, Morley, Hetty, and Hartop; not to mention three dozen others in the swarming, seafaring population all around her.

To lose sight of self utterly for one moment is to have lived for one moment.

Rebecca lived much now, for she never had time to think of herself at all. And the very person who took her away from herself most was that bonny, shrewd, beautiful Hetty.

Mrs. Tryon had a fight with Hetty about her treatment of Rebecca; but after a long engagement of an hour Tryon retired, with all her masts shot away (but with her colors flying), leaving Hetty the victor. As I can not, from want of space, give an account of the whole of this great battle, I will give the last part of it; so that *ex pede Herculem*, the reader may judge what the beginning of the fight was like.

"You worry the girl so," said Tryon.

"I want to," said Hetty. "I want to take her out of herself, and make her think of me, not of my father."

"Why?"

"Because I am beginning to believe that my

father is in heaven," said Hetty. "The Society are getting very anxious."

"But sending her these errands in such weather," said Mrs. Tryon; "you will kill her."

"She is not made of sugar," said Hetty.

Rebecca came in at this moment, and as an illustration of how much Hetty meant to attend to Mrs. Tryon, she said to Rebecca, coolly:

"I want sardines for my supper. I am to have every thing I fancy, and I fancy them. And the sardines at the corner shop are nothing but pilchards, and taste of hair-oil. Go up the street, and get a box of the small ones at Elmses."

And Rebecca went out into the rain again, without one word.

"I call it shameful usage," said Mrs. Tryon.

"It is the system I mean to pursue with her," said Hetty, coolly.

When Rebecca came back with the sardines Hetty called her to her.

"Rebecca, Mrs. Tryon has been saying that if I try you as I do you will lose your love for me. Is that so?"

"She must be perfectly foolish," said Rebecca, sharply. "I wish you would try me more. You don't think it, Hetty?"

"Not I. I will tell you the whole truth. If sailors' wives brood and think of nothing but themselves and their husbands they will go mad. Unless you are busy you will never be happy. I have no letter from Jack, from Valparaiso."

"And I have none from Alfred."

"Self again. You should think of me, not of my father. I told you that pa was gone to Patagonia, and you don't suppose that there are letter-boxes there. You should think about me."

But Rebecca cried very much indeed, and Hetty let her alone for a little.

"Becky, dear," she said at last, "get me to bed, and send for Doctor Warnford. I am going to be ill." And Rebecca got her to bed and sent for the doctor.

Meanwhile Hetty had leaned her face to the wall, weeping silently. "Father and Jack both together. O God, in thine infinite mercy, judge me not too heavily!"

On the morrow, Hetty, lying in the same bed where Mr. Turner had died, and watching the ships pass up and down the river, lay with a brave boy on her bosom, and was quite quiet and well, saying very little indeed.

Presently came Mrs. Tryon with a piece of news which she imparted to Rebecca. "Jack Hartop has lost his ship."

Rebecca was so puzzled by the news that she found herself wondering whether Jack Hartop had dropped his ship down an area railings, or lost it at cards, or left it accidentally in a railway carriage, or gone on shore forgetfully and let it sail away by itself into unknown seas; when Mrs. Tryon said, sharply:

"You are wool-gathering. Don't do it. He has lost his ship on Cape Northumberland, and his certificate with it."

"It will kill her," said Rebecca.

"Yes, if she is told. But she must not be. Now you understand."

"Yes, I understand," said Rebecca, and Mrs. Tryon walked out.

It was a long time before Hetty was well

enough to be told any thing about Hartop's mishap. It was a much longer time before Rebecca said one word to her about it.

She did not know what to do. God solved the problem for her ultimately, in this way:

Hetty had got about, on the wharf, and by the river, with her baby, impressing on the newly-formed retina of that young gentleman the images of ships. Otherwise the life went on among the sailors' wives left waiting for some who came back hearty and well; for some who came back broken, though as dear as ever; and for some who never came back at all. It had come on to rain one evening, and Rebecca caught Hetty on the wharf, and pulled her into the house.

"I have news," said Rebecca.

"You need not trouble to say that, Becky," said Hetty. "Is it pa or Jack?"

"Jack," said Rebecca. "He has lost his ship and been court-martialed."

"Then he is not dead?" said Hetty.

"Not he," said Rebecca.

"Has Jack lost his certificate?" asked Hetty.

"No, Hetty. Hetty, be quiet and I will tell you every thing. Hetty, listen, and be quiet."

"I am quite quiet," said Hetty. "If Jack is alive and well, what care I? You say that he has not lost his certificate. If they had dared to take it away I would have tweaked Dr. Deane's nose till they renewed it."

"But I have to read you something," said Rebecca.

"You had better read it then," said Hetty.

Rebecca read, in a very fluttering voice, from a newspaper, *The Melbourne Argus*:

"The Board which sat on Captain Hartop, of the ship *Flying Cloud*, have reported.

"It appears that Captain Hartop was keeping his due course, when, being warned by the sudden fall of the mercury, he made for sea, but in consequence of the calm which preceded the hurricane which has devastated our southern shores, he was unable to get way on his ship. After the cyclone struck her of course there was no possibility of saving her. Up to this point the Board consider that Captain Hartop's conduct was most seamanlike—"

"Thank you for nothing, quoth the gallipot," said Hetty, quietly. "If Jack could not fiddle his ship out of any thing in reason, I should like to see the man who could."

"After the ship struck on the reef under Cape Northumberland, the conduct of Captain Hartop was beyond all praise for which they can find words. His personal prestige among his sailors seems to have been so great that on this terrible night they passed quietly into the boats, in the calmer water in the lee of the reef, without noticing that he himself had remained with his first mate, Green—"

"I shall not discharge that young man," said Hetty, with a slight flutter in her voice; "go on, Rebecca. Jack, Jack, you are a sailor!"

"—In order to see whether there was any chance of saving any thing for the underwriters in case of the gale moderating, taking his chance of swimming on shore. The Board wish it to be distinctly understood that their opinion is that during this unhappy wreck, and in the long march between the place of the wreck and the

nearest settlement, Captain Hartop conducted himself from first to last like a splendid British sailor."

"Of course Jack did," said Hetty, quietly. "Do not I know him? Jack is a man of pluck and energy. Jack is a sailor, every inch of him. I suppose his owners will give him another ship at once, after that report. If they don't, I will spend a little time at their office not very pleasantly for them."

And she looked Rebecca straight in the face as cool as a cucumber. And Rebecca was deeply puzzled.

"Well, and so that is the whole of it, is it?" said Hetty. "I am glad that beast of a ship is at the bottom of the sea without drowning Jack or any of the men. Is there any thing more to tell?"

Rebecca was getting more and more puzzled. "Has she a heart at all?" she said to herself.

"Yes, Hetty," she said; "but I do not know how to tell it. The Panama route—"

There was no need to say more, or to question whether or no Hetty had a heart. The door opened quickly, and in the open doorway stood Jack Hartop.

Hetty stood up and spread out her ten fingers toward him. In less than a second her pretty arms were round his neck, and he was hugging her like a bear. She said, "Love, love, love," and he said, "Darling, darling, darling," which is folly the most incurable. But if you will bring me any gentleman who will affirm on his oath that he has never made a fool of himself to the same extent, I will politely decline that gentleman's acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

THE life thus enriched by two whom she loved went smoothly on for Rebecca. Not cheerfully, for there came no word of Mr. Morley at all. Hetty and Hartop spoke continually about him, always pleasantly. When it was hot, Hetty would say, "I doubt he is cold, poor dear, there where he is;" and Hartop would say, "Ay, it is winter there now." At dinner Hetty might say, "I doubt he has no lamb and green peas to-day, poor man;" and Hartop would say, "No, he will be having mainly fish and seal beef for his dinner. It is not bad, but not so good as this."

So they would talk to her, keeping his image perpetually before her mind, they both having given up all hope.

They kept from her the news that the missionary ship had been lost, but that a few of the missionaries were heard to be alive three months after. They kept from her their knowledge of the bitter, hopeless coast of Patagonia, and Hetty had so persistently forced on her the maxim that sailors' wives must not fret, that she believed her, and abode in quiet, busy, and not unhappy, ignorant of the chances of the sea.

But day by day it became evident to her that Jack Hartop was growing to be a person of great consequence among a certain great and powerful society. Her father had belonged to this society, and she had been to a May meeting of it, presided over by a certain great earl; and one day

in these times she found this same earl, whom she knew by sight, talking eagerly and familiarly with Jack Hartop.

She heard him say, "It is certainly a splendid offer—a splendid offer. And as a sailor, Mr. Hartop, you think that the yacht is big enough."

"Bless you, my lord, I would sail her any where! Two hundred and eighty tons!—why, she is a frigate."

"It is somewhat singular that Lord Ducetoy, who is not even a subscriber, and a—"

At this moment Rebecca passed with a slight bow and went on.

"Who is that young lady?" said Lord S.

"Miss Turner."

"Oh; I was saying that it seems singular that a mere sportsman like Lord Ducetoy should interest himself so deeply in a cause like this, as to lend his yacht and her stores, and offer to pay a picked crew out of his own pocket, on condition of your commanding the expedition."

"My lord," said Hartop, "it is easily accounted for. Lord Ducetoy is cousin to Miss Turner, who has just passed, and Lord Ducetoy was under the deepest obligations to her father for saving his property from the Philpott smash."

"But what has Miss Turner to do with it?"

"She is engaged to be married to Morley, and she does not know what you and I do."

"God help her in her grief!" said Lord S., raising his hat solemnly.

"Amen," said Jack Hartop.

"When can you sail?"

"Well, in consequence of this offer of Lord Ducetoy's, I can get to sea in a week. If they are alive, they owe their lives to Lord Ducetoy."

"Under God," said Lord S.

"Under God, I mean," said Jack. "But he has saved us in one way or another two months of valuable time."

"It is really so."

"By-the-by, my lord, Miss Turner is to know nothing of Lord Ducetoy's gift."

"Indeed! Was there ever any tenderness in that quarter?"

"Oh, never, I think. He lost his heart effectually in America, before he ever saw her. But he has a profound admiration for her."

"Is Mrs. Hartop going?" said Lord S.

"Oh yes, my lord, *she* is going. You may be quite certain that she could not keep her hand out of a thing of this kind."

"God go with her!" said Lord S., and so they parted.

"Rebecca," said Hetty to her, next morning, "Jack has got another ship."

"A good one?"

"A splendid one. A missionary ship. United Missionary Society. The U. M. S. have picked him out. And I am going too."

"I wish I was," said Rebecca; "but I am so glad for Jack. I can not go, for Alfred might come while I was away, and would be very sorry to miss me."

Hetty went quietly out of the room, humming a tune, as if to fetch something, went up stairs, and threw herself on her bed in a fury and tempest of tears. She believed—as we all did—that she was bound on a quest for some relic or remnant of the dead, left carelessly by wolf or the hardly less cruel savage.

Jack, however, had given his orders that Hetty

was to be ready in six days, and so there was fine stitching, and sewing, and shopping, with not much time to talk about matters. The yacht had come round from Cowes. It was to sail on Saturday, and on Friday, all day long, Rebecca was working in Hetty's cabin. She thought to herself, "What a beautiful place!" Indeed it was, for it was the cabin which Lord Ducetoy had decorated for his young wife.

She heard Lord Ducetoy's voice in the main cabin, and a lady's voice who talked to him. She could not help hearing.

"My love," said the lady, "I quite agree with you; by giving up our cruise the society gains two months. I do not regret."

"But I had her decorated for you, love—only for Channel work: and she is going to the ocean."

"Well," said Lady Ducetoy, "I frankly and freely give my decorations to the ocean. My husband has done a generous and a beautiful deed, for the sake of a noble woman; that is worth all decorations to me."

They did not know she was on board, and they did not see her; but she heard them, and after a time understood what Lady Ducetoy meant. She hid from them, and it was only after the schooner had sailed that she knew that the noble woman, spoken of by Lady Ducetoy, was no other than her own self.

Hetty dismissed her very early on the Saturday morning. On the wharf was a crowd of the strangest people—a bishop, Lord S., and Lord Ducetoy foremost—to see the schooner depart. The tug caught the schooner's hawser, and she went out through the mist into the Kent and Essex sunlight. And *that* was over.

Ducetoy and the bishop were with Rebecca as the vessel rounded the turn in the river. "Rebecca," said Lord Ducetoy, "could we have sent two better ones to seek him?"

"To seek whom?"

"Morley."

"Is he dead?"

"They are gone to see," said Lord Ducetoy; "it has been kept from you."

Rebecca stood amazed, but quite quiet.

"My dear lady," said the bishop; "this matter has been kept from you by a consultation of many men. We are very anxious about Morley, and some of us believe that there is no hope. I am not of those who think there is no hope. For I most entirely think that God has a great work in hand for Morley, and that Morley has not been taken to his rest yet. I may be wrong—who can judge God's ways?—but, my dear young lady, I believe that you will live to see Morley by your side again, doing God's work with your assistance."

"Meanwhile?" said Rebecca, calmly.

"Meanwhile," said the bishop, calmly, "do as you are doing. If you are not to meet him again on earth, you are rendering yourself more fit to meet him in heaven."

For the next nine months the inhabitants of Limehouse got familiarized to a tall and splendidly beautiful young lady, always dressed in black, who walked perpetually about among the poor, followed by a little withered lady in gray, who carried her basket, and did what the tall young lady told her with never one murmur. These two were Rebecca and Miss Soper, for Rebecca had conquered and vanquished her Soper.

Said Soper to Rebecca once, in these times, "Becky, I tried to find out the secret of living to God; and I failed, until you showed it to me. Who showed it to you?"

"Morley," said Rebecca.

Nine months; and hope growing dead as time went on. Hope of Morley utterly gone now to her, but not to others.

She was sitting in her class of girls one day, when the bishop came in, and touched her on the shoulder. Rebecca, although a dissenter, had that love and reverence for this bishop which, I believe, is common to all sects in the Church of Christ. She rose from her seat, with her black lace shawl drooping from one shoulder, and bowed deeply. And the young dissenters stared open-eyed at the spectacle of a real bishop talking to Teacher.

"I have news from the sea," said the bishop; holding out his left hand.

"Good or bad, my lord?" said Rebecca.

"That is what I can not make out," said the bishop. "We have heard from Hartop. He has recovered two, but believes Morley to be alive ten miles to the northward. Until we get his letter we know nothing."

"And when shall we get his letter?" asked Rebecca.

"Well," said the bishop, "he only allows himself ten days for exploration; and so it comes to this that he will bring his own letter."

"Then the news about Mr. Morley will be brought by Hartop and Hetty?" she said.

"That is exactly the case," said the bishop.

One summer's night—it was half past eleven—Rebecca was sitting up at some of her charity accounts, when she heard a step on the stair and sat rigid.

She knew it was Hetty's. Hetty came very quickly up the stair, threw open the door in all her full beauty, fresh from the sea, bareheaded, with the very salt on her hair. And Rebecca gave a loud wild cry, inarticulate, yet meaning much, for she saw that Hetty was not in mourning. Not one solitary scrap of black about her. A great deal of pink ribbon, certainly; sailors love it, and so their wives wear it.

"Becky, my sweet-heart," she said, "you must keep yourself cool."

"Is there news?" said Rebecca.

"I do not know what you mean by news, Becky," said Hetty. "But if you mean that we have found pa, and got pa, and brought pa home, and that pa is standing outside the door waiting to come in, why I say you are right." And she sat down on a chair by the door, and beat her knees, and cried.

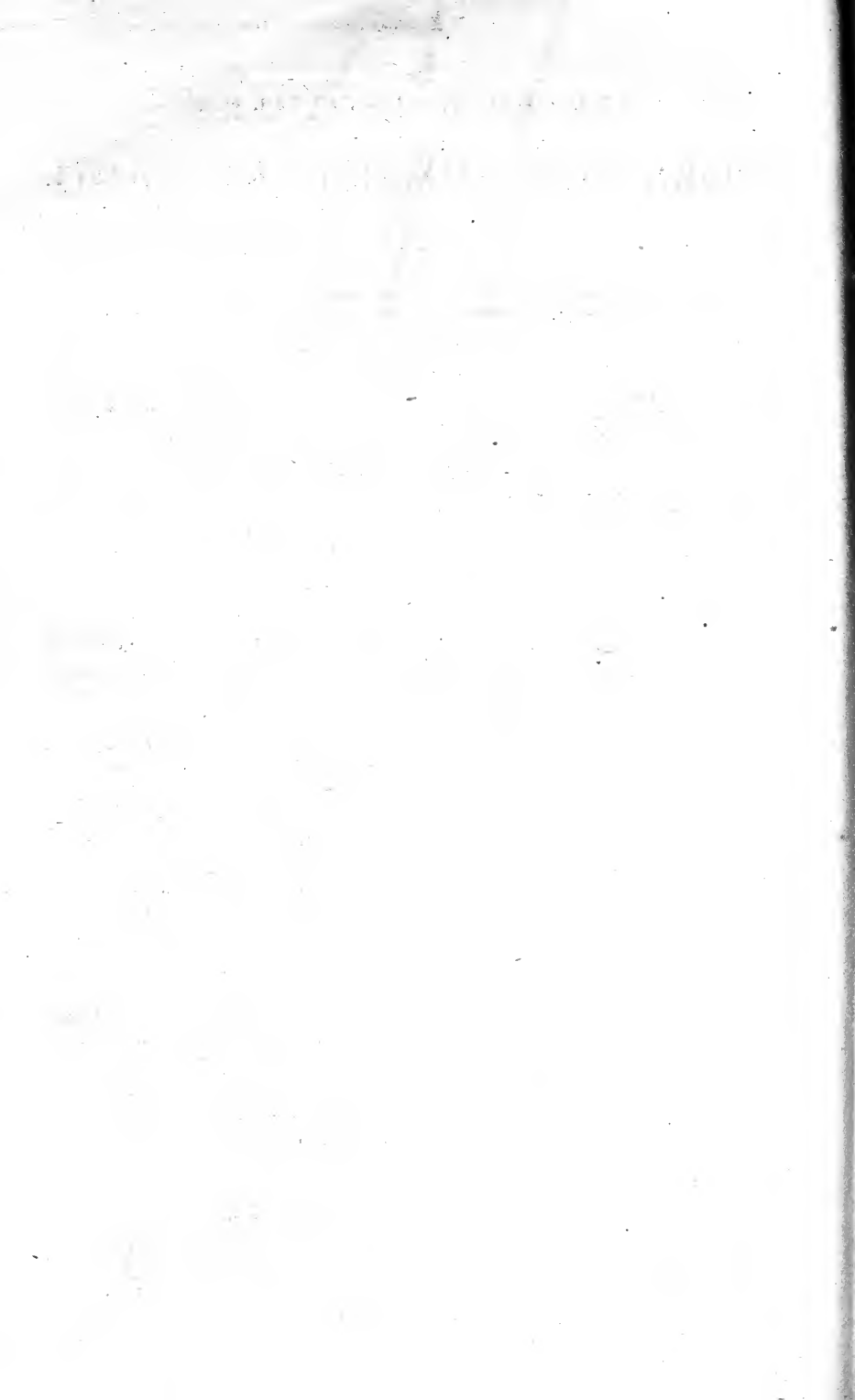
It was actually true. From the lonely cavern on the ocean shore, death, in whose jaws he had lived so long, had given him up to love. It seemed incredible, even to Hetty now, but there was her frizzled hair smothered in Rebecca's, and she laughed and believed.

The news of the safety of Morley had been known in London before Rebecca knew it. The Society had met, and it was unanimously agreed that Mr. Morley should be requested to accept the mission to Honawoorra as soon as his health would permit. The offer came to him the day after his arrival, and he answered that his health was in perfect order, and that the sooner he went the better. He wanted three weeks to be married in, and then he was ready.

One day, three weeks after this, Soper, Lord Ducetoy, Mr. Spicer, Lord S., the little Popish doctor, Mrs. Russel, the two Tibbys, Mr. Akin, Mr. Hagbut, and Carry, and one hundred and fifty new friends, unnamed in this story, went to see the great missionary ship, *Eirene*, pass by out on her glorious expedition. As she passed they cheered, as surely no people ever cheered before, for on her quarter-deck stood Morley and Rebecca, Jack Hartop and Hetty.

They went away to the work which God had found them to do. Whether they lived long and died happy, whether they were rich or poor, or whether they had many children or few, is nothing to us. God fitted these four people for certain work in this world, and three of them had to wait till the fourth was fit to join them. I have tried to show how Rebecca was made ready for the others. Rebecca's difficulties have been so continually before one, that some might think I ought to call my story Rebecca. But I think, if you please, that in honor of the young lady, the reputation of whose deeds kept Rebecca firm, I will call my story after its real heroine, Hetty.





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